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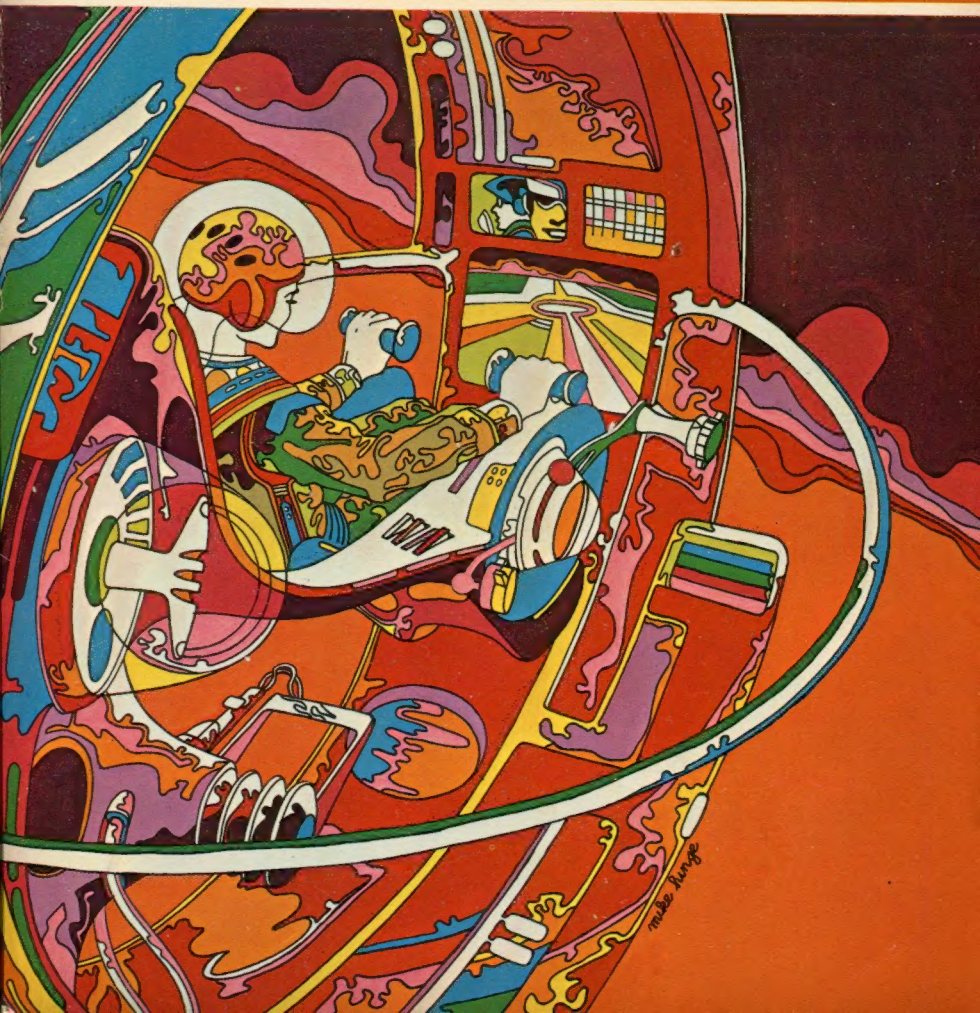
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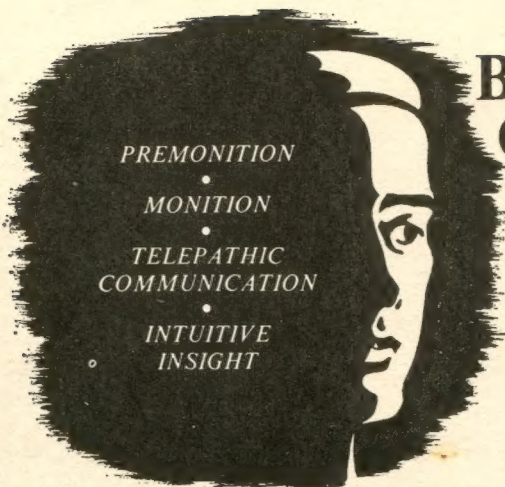
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TRULLION, ALASTOR 2263, JACK VANCE





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MARCH, 1973

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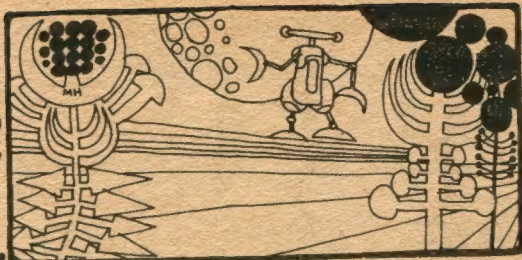
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TED
WHITE

EDITORIAL



ONCE AGAIN, I want to begin an editorial with a letter, this one from Ivor Rogers, who, with Stuart Burns, chaired this year's Secondary Universe Conference at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. Rogers brings a different viewpoint to our continuing forum on sf conventions; the Secondary Universe Conference is a convocation of academics for whom science fiction is at once a favorite form of fiction and a profession-once-removed. The Conference brings together those who *teach* science fiction and those whose interests are scholarly. A few sf fans can be found among the attendees, and several professionals beside myself were speakers at this year's conference, but in the main the Secondary Universe Conference (of which this was the fifth) is given over to the presentation of papers and discussion of the teaching of sf—its history, nature, and creation.

Dear Ted,

It's one day after the end of the Fifth Secondary Universe conference, and I finally have time to comment on some of the letters and editorials that have been appearing in *AMAZING* and *FANTASTIC*. First about cons: I've run three specialized type sf cons and have been a fairly frequent attendee at Worldcons and regionals since Chicon II in the early 1960's. I've put out over \$1,000.00 of my own money for the cons I've run (on a teacher's salary which has varied from \$7,000 to \$10,500) and have

often faced the prospect of being left holding the bag to the tune of \$1,000 to \$1,500 if the whole thing fell through. This last Secondary Universe will only leave me in the hole about \$125.00 because a lot of people came out to my bookstore and bought books and magazines. That's a potential loss of income, but until the books were sold I didn't have the money anyway, so I don't count that as a personal loss. I do know that one of the Secondary Universe conferences went in the hole into the four figures. I can't get too excited about someone pulling a thousand or two out of the proceeds from a con since you are really gambling with your own hard-earned money. Talking to Tony Lewis, chairman of Noreascon, he pointed out that anybody who wants to run a con and get paid more than 50¢ an hour has to get a hell of a lot more money out of a con than a few thousand. If some bastard is ripping the fans off for 10 or 15 K, that's another story, but I don't know anybody who is pulling off that kind of promotion. We are all still doing this for the love of it; the exploiters haven't moved in yet.

The *kind* of cons we want to have is something else again. We do need some sort of big annual Trade-Fan-Comics-Film extravaganza once a year to keep the whole thing together. This has to be planned 3 to 5 years in advance, and fandom needs a superstructure with a paid (or independently wealthy) executive secretary to put this all together. I don't know if something like this could ever

(Continued on page 126)

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A new Jack Vance novel is always a special treat, for Vance has a unique vision, one in which no detail of Alien culture is too minute for examination, and none too insignificant to spark unsuspected ramifications. Not since his much-praised Emphvrio (FANTASTIC STORIES, June & August, 1969; Doubleday) has he brought his skill to bear upon a novel like this: life among the five trillion of the Alastor Cluster . . . with an immediate focus upon—

TRULLION ALASTOR:2262

JACK VANCE

(PART ONE)

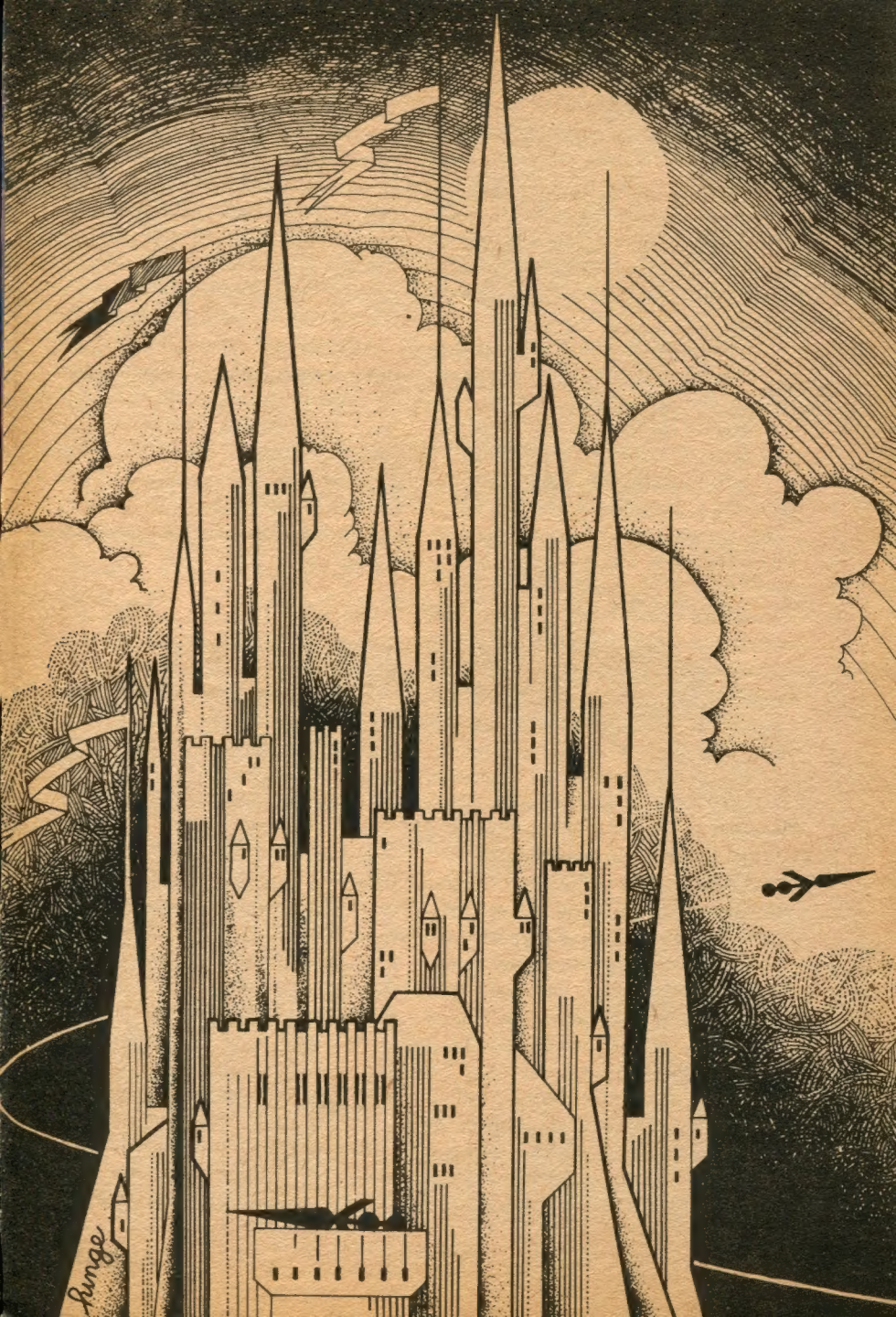
Illustrated by MIKE HINGE

OUT TOWARD the rim of the galaxy hangs Alastor Cluster, a whorl of thirty thousand live stars in an irregular volume twenty to thirty thousand light-years in diameter. The surrounding region is dark and unoccupied except for a few hermit stars; Alastor presents a flamboyant display of starstreams, luminous webs, sparkling nodes. Dust clouds hang across the brightness; the engulfed stars glow russet, rose, or smoky amber. Dead stars keep their own orbits: black hulks, paved with clinker; chunks of nuclear matter which have gathered to themselves crusts of carbide slag, iron

dust, frozen gas, oddments of rock: the so-called 'starments.'

Scattered about the cluster are three thousand inhabited planets with a human population of approximately five trillion persons. The worlds are diverse, the populations equally so; nevertheless they share a common language and all submit to the authority of the Connatic at Lusz, on the world Numenes.

The current Connatic is Oman Ursht, sixteenth in the Idite succession: a pensive man who often ponders the quirk of fate which brought him to his awesome position. He is quite aware



that, from the objective purview, such marveling introspection is sheer ingenuousness: no matter who occupied the position, that person must necessarily wonder at his own astonishing singularity. Still, being human, the Connatic must reckon with his subjectivity and he is able to enjoy irrationality for its own sake without guilt.

Oman Ursht, in private, is a person of no great distinction, being of average stature and ordinary appearance. His features are regular, his skin is fair, his hair is dark russet brown, inclined to curl into ringlets. On public occasions he wears a severe black uniform with a black casque, and thereby seems to become inflexible and exacting: the impression he wishes to convey. Essentially Oman Ursht is a calm and reasonable man, who tends to under-rather than over-administrate. He ponders all aspects of his public conduct, knowing well that his slightest act—a gesture, a word, a symbolic nuance—might start off an avalanche of unpredictable consequences: hence his effort to create the public image of a man rigid, terse and unemotional.

To the casual observer, Alastor Cluster is a system placid and peaceful. The Connatic knows differently. He recognizes that wherever human beings strive for advantage, disequilibrium exists; lacking easement the social fabric becomes taut and sometimes rips asunder. The Connatic conceives his function to be the identification and relief of social stresses. Sometimes he ameliorates, sometimes he employs techniques of distraction. When harshness becomes unavoidable he

deploys his military agency, the Whelm. Oman Ursht winces to see an insect injured; the Connatic without compunction orders a million persons to their doom. In many cases, believing that each condition generates its own counter-condition, he stands aloof, fearing to introduce a confusing third factor. *When in doubt, do nothing*: this is one of the Connatic's favorite credos.

After an ancient tradition he roams anonymously about the cluster. Occasionally, in order to remedy an injustice, he represents himself as an important official; often he rewards kindness and self-sacrifice. He is fascinated by the ordinary life of his subjects and listens attentively to such dialogues as:

Old Man: (to a lazy youth) If everybody had what they wanted, who would work? Nobody.

Youth: Not I, depend on it.

Old Man: And you'd be the first to cry out in anguish, for it's work that keeps the lights on. Get on with it now; put your shoulder into it. I can't bear sloth.

Youth: (grumbling) If I were Connatic I'd arrange that everyone had their wishes. No toil! free seats at the hussade game! a fine space-yacht! new clothes every day! servants to lay forth delectable foods!

Old Man: The Connatic would have to be a genius to satisfy both you and the servants. They'd live only to box your ears. Now get on with your work.

Or again:

Young Man: Never go near Lusz, I

beseech you! The Connatic would take you for his own!

Girl: (mischievously) Then what would you do?

Young Man: I'd rebel! I'd be the most magnificent starmenter* ever to terrify the skies! At last I'd conquer the power of Alastor: Whelm, Connatic and all, and win you back for my very own.

Girl: You're gallant, but never never never would the Connatic choose ordinary little me; already the most beautiful women of Alastor attend him at Lusz.

Young Man: What a merry life he must lead! To be Connatic: this is my dream!

Girl: makes fretful sound and becomes cool.

Young Man is puzzled. Oman Ursht moves away.

LUSZ, the Connatic's palace, is indeed a remarkable structure, rising ten thousand feet above the sea on five great pylons. Visitors roam the lower promenades; from every world of Alastor Cluster they come, and from places beyond: the Darkling Regions, the Primarchic, the Erdic Sector, the Rubrimar Cluster, and all the other parts of the galaxy which men have made their own.

Above the public promenades are governmental offices, ceremonial halls, a communications complex; and, somewhat higher, the famous Ring of the Worlds with an informational chamber for each inhabited planet of

the Cluster. The highest pinnacles contain the Connatic's personal quarters. They penetrate the clouds and sometimes pierce through to the upper sky. When sunlight glistens on its iridescent surfaces, Lusz, the palace of the Connatic, is a wonderful sight and is often reckoned the most inspiring artifact of the human race.

CHAPTER I

CHAMBER 2262 along the Ring of the Worlds pertained to Trullion, the lone planet of a small white star, one spark in a spray curling out toward the cluster's edge. The geographical globe in Chamber 2262 indicated Trullion to be a small world, for the most part clouds and water. A single narrow continent, Merland, clasped an arc of the equator, dwindling and drowning to become a chain of islands, which themselves submerged to leave half a world of empty ocean rolling between the ice-caps.

Trade-winds slanted in upon Merland to sweep rain-clouds against the flanks of the central mountain range; hundreds of rivers returned down pleasant valleys, where fruit and cereals grew so plentifully as to command no value. Fat herds grazed the meadows; the rivers supplied water-salads, mud-worms, rudge, lotus bulbs, lotus fruit, crustaceans; the oceans and shores offered their own abundance to whomever chose to gather it in.

The original settlers brought with them those habits of thrift and competitive zeal which had promoted survival in a previously harsh environment; the first era of Trill history

*Starmenter: pirates and marauders, whose occasional places of refuge are the so-called 'starments'.

produced a dozen wars, a thousand fortunes, a caste of hereditary aristocrats, and a waning of the initial dynamism. The Trill commonalty asked itself: why toil, why carry weapons when a life of feasts, singing, revelry and hedonistic ease was an equal option? In the space of three generations old Trullion became a memory. The Trill now worked as circumstances directed: to prepare for a feast, to indulge his taste for hussade, to earn a pulsor for his boat, a pot for his kitchen, a length of cloth for his *paray*; that easy skirt-like garment worn by man and woman alike. The average Trill occasionally tilled his lush acres, fished the ocean, netted the river, harvested wild fruit, and when the mood was on him dug emeralds and opals from the mountain slopes, or gathered *cauch*.* He worked perhaps an hour each day, or occasionally as much as two or three; he spent considerably more time musing on the verandah of his ramshackle house. He distrusted most technical devices, finding them unsympathetic, confusing and—more importantly—expensive, though he gingerly used a telephone the better to order his social activities, and took the pulsor of his boat for granted.

As in most bucolic societies, the Trill knew his precise place in the hierarchy of classes. At the summit, almost a race apart, was the aristocracy; at the bottom were the nomad Trevanyi, a group equally distinct. The Trill, generally

tolerant, disdained unfamiliar or exotic ideas. Ordinarily calm and gentle, he nonetheless, under sufficient provocation, demonstrated ferocious rages, and certain of his customs—particularly the macabre ritual at the *prutanshyr*—were almost barbaric. The government of Trullion was rudimentary and a matter in which the average Trill took little interest. Merland was divided into twenty prefectures, each administered by a few bureaus and a small group of officials, who constituted a caste superior to the ordinary Trill, but considerably inferior to the aristocrats. Trade with the rest of the cluster was unimportant; on all Trill only four space-ports existed: Port Gaw in the west of Merland, Port Kerubian on the north coast, Port Maheul on the south coast and Vayamenda in the east.

A hundred miles east of Port Maheul was the market town Welgen, famous for its fine hussade stadium; beyond Welgen lay the Fens, a district of remarkable beauty. Thousands of waterways divided the area into a myriad islands, some tracts of good dimension, some so small as to support only a fisherman's cabin and a tree for the mooring of his boat.

Everywhere entrancing vistas merged one into another. Gray-green menas, silver-russet pomanders, jerdines, stood in stately rows along the waterways, and gave each island its distinctive silhouette. The waterways sometimes opened into ponds and lakes, then narrowed so that the trees met overhead. The light of the Fens was pale and delicate, and seemed to shimmer with colors too transient and subtle for the eye to detect. In the morning a mist ob-

**Cauch*: an aphrodisiac drug derived from the spore of a mountain mold, and used by Trills to a greater or lesser extent. Some retreated so far into erotic fantasy as to become irresponsible, and the subject of mild ridicule. Irresponsibility, in the context of the Trill environment, could hardly be accounted a critical social problem.

scured the distances; the sunsets were subdued pageants of lime-green and lavender. Skiffs and runabouts slid along the water; occasionally an aristocrat's yacht glided past, or the ferry which connected Welgen with the Fen villages.

Out upon their dilapidated verandahs sat the country folk, with jugs of home-made wine at hand. Sometimes they played music, using concertinas, small round-bellied guitars, mouth-calliopes which produced cheerful warbling trills. Haze hung across the distance; far objects became imprecise, as if in soft focus, and showed the many vague colors of a pearl.

In the dead center of the Fens, three miles from the village Saurkash, was Rabendary Island, where lived Jut Hulden, his wife Marucha, and their three sons. Rabendary Island comprised about a hundred acres, including a thirty-acre forest of mena, blackwood, candlenut, semprissima. To the south spread the wide expanse of Ambal Broad. Farwan Water bounded Rabendary on the east, Gilweg Water on the west, and along the north shore flowed the placid Saur River. At the western tip of the island the ramshackle old home of the Huldens stood between a pair of huge mimosa trees. Rosalia vine grew up the posts of the verandah, and overhung the edge of the roof, producing a fragrant shade for the pleasure of those taking their ease in the old string chairs. To the south was a view of Ambal Broad and Ambal Isle, a property of three acres, supporting a number of beautiful pomanders, russet-silver against a background of solemn menas, and three enormous fanzaneels,

holding their great shaggy pompoms high in the air. Through the foliage gleamed the white facade of the manse where Lord Ambal long ago maintained his mistresses. The property had come into the possession of Jut Hulden, but he had no inclination to dwell in the manor; their friends would think them absurd.

In his youth Jut Hulden had played hussade for the Saurkash Serpents. His wife Marucha had been *sheirl** for the Welgen Warlocks; so they had met, and married, and brought into being three sons: Shira, the twins Glinnes and Glay; and a daughter, Sharuc, who had been stolen by the merlings.*

CHAPTER 2

GLINNES HULDEN entered the world crying and kicking; Glay followed an hour later, in watchful silence. From the first day of their lives the two differed: in appearance, in temperament, in all the circumstances of their lives. Glinnes, like Jut and Shira, was amiable, trusting, and easy-natured; he grew into a handsome lad with a clear complexion, dusty-blond hair, a wide,

*Sheirl: an untranslatable term from the special vocabulary of hussade: a glorious nymph, radiant with ecstatic vitality, who impels the players of her team to impossible feats of strength and agility. The sheirl is a virgin who must be protected from the shame of defeat.

*merlings: amphibious half-intelligent indigenes of Trullion, living in tunnels burrowed into the riverbanks. Merlings and men lived on the edge of a most delicate truce; each hated and hunted the other, but under mutually tolerable conditions. The merlings prowled the land at night for carrion, small animals and children. If they molested boats or entered a habitation, men retaliated by dropping explosives into the water. Should a man fall into the water or attempt to swim, he had intruded into the domain of the merlings and risked being dragged under. Similarly, a merling discovered on land was shown no mercy.

smiling mouth. Glinnes entirely enjoyed the pleasures of the Fens: feasts, amorous adventures, star-watching and sailing, hussade, nocturnal merling hunts, simple idleness. Glay at first lacked sturdy good health; for his first six years he was fretful, capitious and melancholy. Then he mended, and quickly overtaking Glinnes was thenceforth the taller of the two. His hair was black; his features taut and keen; his eyes intent. Glinnes accepted events and ideas without skepticism; Glay stood aloof and saturnine. Glinnes was instinctively skillful at hussade; Glay refused to set foot on the field. Though Jut was a fair man he found it hard to conceal his preference for Glinnes. Marucha, herself tall, dark-haired and inclined to romantic meditation, fancied Glay, in whom she thought to detect poetic sensibilities. She tried to interest Glay in music, and explained how through music he could express his emotions and make them intelligible to others. Glay was cold to the idea and produced only a few lackadaisical discords on her guitar.

Glay was a mystery even to himself. Introspection availed nothing; he found himself as confusing as did the rest of his family. As a youth his austere appearance and rather haughty self-sufficiency earned him the soubriquet 'Lord Glay'; perhaps coincidentally Glay was the only member of the household who wanted to move into the manor house on Ambal Isle; even Marucha had put the idea away as a foolish if amusing daydream.

Glay's single confidant was Akadie the mentor, who lived in a remarkable

house on Sarpassante Island, five miles north of Rabendary. Akadie, a thin long-armed man with an ill-assorted set of features: a big nose, sparse curls of snuff-brown hair, glassy blue eyes, a mouth continually trembling at the verge of a smile, like Glay, was something of a misfit. Unlike Glay he had turned idiosyncrasy to advantage, and drew custom even from the aristocracy.

Akadie's profession included the offices of epigrammatist, poet, calligrapher, sage, arbiter of elegance, professional guest (hiring Akadie to grace a party was an act of conspicuous consumption), marriage-broker, legal consultant, repository of local tradition and source of scandalous gossip. Akadie's droll face, gentle voice and subtle language rendered his gossip all the more mordant. Jut distrusted Akadie and had nothing to do with him, to the regret of Marucha, who had never relinquished her social ambitions, and who felt in her heart of hearts that she had married below herself. Hussade sheirls often married lords!

Akadie had traveled to other worlds. At night, during star-watchings* he

*Star-watching: At night the stars of Alastor Cluster blaze in profusion. The atmosphere refracts their light; the sky quivers with beams, glitters and errant flashes. The Trills go out into their gardens with jugs of wine; they name the stars and discuss localities. For the Trills, for almost anyone of Alastor, the night sky was no abstract empyrean, but rather a view across prodigious distances to known places: a vast luminous map. There was always talk of pirates—the so-called 'starmenters'—and their grisly deeds. When Numenes Star shone in the sky the conversation turned to the Connatic and glorious Lusz, and someone always would say: "Best to steady our tongues! Perhaps he sits here now, drinking our wine and marking the dissidents!"—to create a nervous titter, for the Connatic's habit of wandering quietly about the worlds was well-known. Then someone always uttered the brave remark: "Here we are: ten (or twelve or sixteen or twenty,

would mark the stars he had visited; then he would describe their splendor and the astounding habits of their peoples. Jut Hulden cared nothing for travel; his interest in the other worlds lay in the quality of their hussade teams and the location of the Cluster Cham-pions. Young folk took advantage of star-watching to initiate amorous ad-ventures. Whispers and murmurs mingled with the star-lore.

WHEN GLINNES WAS sixteen he saw a starmenter ship: it dropped from the sky above Ambal Broad and slid at reck-
less speed down toward Welgen. The radio provided a minute-by-minute report of the raid. The starmenters landed in the central square, and seething forth plundered the banks, the jewel factors, and the cauch warehouse, cauch being by far the most valuable commodity produced on Trullion. They also seized a number of important per-
sonages to be held for ransom. The raid was swift and well-executed; in ten minutes the starmenters had loaded their ship with loot and prisoners. Unluckily for them a Whelm cruiser chanced to be putting into Port Maheul when the alarm was broadcast and merely altered course to arrive at Welgen instead. Glinnes ran out on the verandah, to see the Whelm ship arrive: a beautiful stately craft enameled in beige, scarlet and black. The ship drop-
ped like an eagle toward Welgen and passed beyond Glinnes' range of vision.

as the case may be) among five trillion! The Con-natic among us? I'll take that chance!"

At such a star-watch, Sharue Hulden wandered off into the darkness. Before her absence was noticed the merlings had seized her and had taken her away underwater.

The voice from the radio cried out in excitement: "—they rise into the air, but here comes the Whelm ship! By the Nine Glories the Whelm ship is here! The starmenters can't go into whisk*; they'd burn up for friction! They must fight!"

The announcer could no longer con-trol his voice for excitement. "The Whelm ship strikes; the starmenter is disabled! Hurrah! it drops back into the square. No, no! Oh horror! what hor-ror! It has fallen upon the market; a hundred persons are crushed! At-tention! Bring in all ambulances, all medical men! Emergency at Welgen! I can hear the sad cries . . . The star-menter ship is broken; still it fights . . . A blue ray . . . Another . . . The Whelm ship answers. The starmenters are quiet; their ship is broken." The an-nouncer fell quiet a moment, then once more was prompted to excitement. "Now what a sight! The folk are crying with rage; they swarm in at the star-menters; they drag them forth . . ." He began to babble, then stopped short and spoke in a more subdued voice. "The constables have intervened; they have pushed back the crowds and the star-menters are now in custody, and this to their own rue, as well they know, for they desperately struggle; how they writhe and kick! It's the prutanshyr for them! They prefer the vengeance of the crowd! . . . What a dreadful deed they have done upon the hapless town Welgen . . ."

Jut and Shira worked in the far or-
chard grafting scions to the apple trees. Glinnes ran to tell them the news.

*Whisk: star-drive.

"... and at last the starmenters were captured and taken away!"

"So much the worse for them," Jut said gruffly, and continued with his work. For a Trill, he was a man unusually self-contained and taciturn: traits which had become intensified since the death of Sharue by the merlings.

Shira said, "They'll be sweeping off the prutanshyr. Perhaps we'd better learn the news."

Jut grunted. "One torturing is much like another. The fire burns; the wheels wrench; the rope strains. Some folk thrive on it. For my excitement I'll watch hussade."

Shira winked at Glinnes. "One game is much like another. The forwards spring; the water splashes; the sheirl loses her clothes, and one pretty girl's belly is much like another's."

"There speaks the voice of experience," said Glinnes, and Shira, the most notorious philanderer of the district, guffawed.

Shira did in fact attend the executions with his mother Marucha, though Jut kept Glinnes and Glay at home.

Shira and Marucha returned by the late ferry. Marucha was tired and went to bed; Shira, however, joined Jut, Glinnes and Glay on the verandah and rendered an account of what he had seen. "Thirty-three they caught, and had them all in cages out in the square. All the preparations were put up before their very eyes. A hard lot of men, I must say; I couldn't place their race. Some might have been Echalites and some might have been Satagones, and one tall white-skinned fellow was said to be a Blaweg. Unfortunates all, in

retrospect. They were naked and painted for shame: heads green, one leg blue, the other red. All gelded, of course. Oh, the prutanshyr's a wicked place! And to hear the music! Sweet as flowers, strange and hoarse! It strikes through you as if your own nerves were being plucked for tones... Ah well, at any rate, a great pot of boiling oil was prepared, and a traveling-crane stood by. The music began; eight Trevanyi and all their horns and fiddles. How can such stern folk make such sweet music? It chills the bones and churns the bowels and puts the taste of blood in your mouth! Chief Constable Filidice was there, but First Agent Gerence was the executioner. One by one the starmenters were grappled by hooks, then lifted and dipped into the oil, then hung up on a great high frame, and I don't know which was more awful: the howls or the beautiful sad music. The people fell down on their knees; some fell into fits and cried out, for terror or joy I can't tell you; I don't know what to make of it... After about two hours all were dead."

"Hmmf," said Jut Hulden. "They won't be back in a hurry: so much, at least, can be said."

Glinnes had listened in horrified fascination. "It's a fearful punishment, even for a starmenter."

"Indeed; that's what it is," said Jut. "Can you guess the reason?"

Glinnes swallowed hard and could not choose between several theories. Jut asked: "Would you now want to be a starmenter and risk such an end?"

"Never," Glinnes declared, from the depths of his soul.

Jut turned to the brooding Glay.

"And you?"

"I never planned to rob and kill in the first place."

Jut gave a hoarse chuckle. "One of the two at least has been dissuaded from crime."

Glinnes said: "I wouldn't like to hear music played to pain."

"And why not?" Shira demanded. "At hussade, when the sheirl is smirched, the music is sweet and wild. Music gives savor to the event, like salt with food."

Gl原因 offered a comment: "Akadie claims that everybody needs catharsis, if it's only a nightmare."

"It may be so," said Jut. "I myself need no nightmares; I've got one before my eyes every moment." Jut referred, as all knew, to the taking of Sharue. Since that time his nocturnal hunts for merling had become almost an obsession.

"Well, if you two twits aren't to be starmenters, what will you be?" asked Shira. "Assuming you don't care to stay in the household."

"I'm for hussade," said Glinnes. "I don't care to fish, nor scrape catch." He recalled the brave beige, scarlet and black ship which had struck down the starmenters. "Or perhaps I'll join the Whelm and lead a life of adventure."

"I know nothing of the Whelm," said Jut ponderously, "but if it's hussade I can give you one or two useful hints. Run five miles every day to develop your stamina. Jump the practise pits until you can make sure landings blind-fold. Forbear with the girls, or there'll be no virgins left in the prefecture for your sheirl."

"It's a chance I am willing to take,"

said Glinnes.

Jut squinted through his black eyebrows at Gl原因. "And what of you? Will you stay in the household?"

Gl原因 gave a shrug. "If I could, I'd travel space, and see the Cluster."

Jut raised his bushy eyebrows. "How will you travel, lacking money?"

"There are methods, according to Akadie. He visited twenty-two worlds, working from port to port."

"Hmmf. That may be. But never use Akadie for your model. He has derived nothing from his travels but sophistry and useless erudition."

Gl原因 thought a moment. "If this is true," he said, "as it must be, since you so assert, then Akadie learned his sympathy and breadth of intellect here on Trullion: which is all the more to his credit."

Jut, who never resented honest defeat, clapped Gl原因 on the back. "In you he has a loyal friend."

"I am grateful to Akadie," said Gl原因. "He has explained many things to me."

Shira, who teemed with lewd ideas, gave Gl原因 a sly nudge. "Follow Glinnes on his rounds, and you'll never need Akadie's explanations."

"I'm not talking about that sort of thing."

"Then what sort of thing are you talking about?"

"I don't care to explain; you'd only jeer at me, which is tiresome."

"No jeering!" declared Shira. "We'll give you a fair hearing! Say on."

"Very well. I don't really care whether you jeer or not. I've long felt a lack, or an emptiness. I want a weight to thrust my shoulder against; I want a

challenge I can defy and conquer."

"Brave words," said Shira dubiously. "But—"

"But why should I so trouble myself? Because I have but one life, one existence. I want to make my mark, somewhere, somehow. When I think of it I grow almost frantic! My foe is the universe; it defies me to perform remarkable deeds, so that ever after folk will remember me! Why should not the name 'Gl原因 Hulden' ring as far and clear as 'Paro' and 'Slabar Velche'?* I will make it so; it is the least I owe myself!"

Jut said in a gloomy voice: "You had best become either a great hussade player or a great starmenter."

"I overspoke myself," said Gl原因. "In truth I want neither fame nor notoriety; I do not care whether I astonish a single person. I want only the chance to do my best."

There was silence on the verandah. From the reeds came the croak of nocturnal insects, and water lapped softly against the dock; a merling perhaps had risen to the surface, to listen for interesting sounds.

Jut said in a heavy voice, "The ambition does you no discredit. Still I wonder how it would be if everyone strove with such urgency. Among five trillion such folk, where would peace abide?"

"It is a difficult problem," said Gl原因. "Indeed I had never considered it before. Gl原因, you amaze me! You are unique!"

Gl原因 gave a deprecatory grunt. "I'm

*Paro: a hussade player, the darling of the cluster, celebrated for his aggressive and daring play.
Slabar Velche: a notorious starmenter.

not so sure of this. There must be many, many folk desperate to fulfill themselves."

"Perhaps this is why people become starmenters," suggested Gl原因. "They are bored at home; at hussade they're inept; the girls turn away from them; so off they go in their black hulls, for sheer revenge!"

"The theory is as good as any," agreed Jut Hulden. "But revenge cuts both ways, as thirty-three folk discovered today."

"There is something here I can't understand," said Gl原因. "The Con-natic knows of their crimes; why does he not deploy the Whelm and root them out once and for all?"

Shira laughed indulgently. "Do you think the Whelm sits idle? The ships are constantly on the prowl. But for every living world you'll find a hundred dead ones, not to mention moons, asteroids, hulks and starments. The hiding places are beyond enumeration. The Whelm can only do its best."

Gl原因 turned to Gl原因: "There you are: join the Whelm and see the cluster. Get paid while you travel!"

"It's a thought," said Gl原因.

CHAPTER 3

IN THE END it was Gl原因 who went to Port Maheul and there enlisted in the Whelm. He was seventeen at the time. Gl原因 neither enlisted in the Whelm, played hussade, nor yet became a starmenter. Shortly after Gl原因 joined the Whelm he also left home, and wandered the length and breadth of Merland, from time to time working to gain a few ozols, as often living off of the

land. On several occasions he attempted the ruses Akadie had recommended to travel to other worlds; for one reason or another his efforts met no success, and he never accumulated sufficient funds to buy himself passage.

For a period he traveled with a band of Trevanyi*, finding their exactness and intensity an amusing contrast to the imprecision of the average Trill.

After eight years of wandering he returned to Rabendary Island, where everything went about as before, although Shira at last had given up hussade. Jut still waged his nocturnal war against the merlings; Marucha still hoped to win social acceptance among the local gentry, who had absolutely no intention of allowing her to succeed. Jut, at the behest of Marucha, now called himself Squire Hulden of Rabendary, but refused to move into Ambal Manse, which, despite its noble proportions, grand chambers and polished wainscoting, lacked a broad verandah overlooking the water. The family regularly received news from Glinnes, who had done well in the Whelm. At bootcamp he had earned a recommendation to officer training school, after which he had been assigned to the Tactical Corps of the 191st Squadron, and placed in command of Landing Craft No. 191-539 and its twenty-man complement.

Glinnes could now look forward to a rewarding career, with excellent retirement benefits; still he was not entirely happy. He had envisioned a life

more romantically adventurous; he had seen himself prowling the cluster in a patrol boat, searching out starmenter nests, then putting into remote and picturesque settlements for a few days shore-leave: a life far more dashing and haphazard than the perfectly organized routine in which he found himself. To relieve the monotony he played hussade; his team always placed high in fleet competition, and won two championships.

Glinnes at last requested transfer to a patrol craft, but his request was denied. He went before the squadron commander, who listened to Glinnes' protests and complaints with an attitude of easy unconcern. "The transfer was denied for a very good reason."

"What reason?" demanded Glinnes. "Certainly I am not considered indispensable to the survival of the squadron?"

"Not altogether. Still we don't want to disrupt a smoothly functioning organization." He adjusted some papers on his desk, then leaned back in his chair. "In confidence, there's a rumor to the effect that we're going into action."

"Indeed? Against whom?"

"As to this, I can only guess. Have you ever heard of the Tamarcho?"

"Yes indeed. I read about them in a journal: a cult of fanatic warriors on a world whose name now escapes me. Apparently they destroy for the love of destruction, or something of the sort."

"Well then, you know as much as I," said the commander, "except that the world is Rhamnotis and the Tamarcho have laid waste an entire district. I would guess that we are going down on Rhamnotis."

*Trevanyi: nomadic folk of a distinctive racial stock, prone to thievery, sorcery and other petty chicaneries; an excitable, passionate, vengeful people. They consider cauch a poison and guard the chastity of their women with fanatic zeal.

"It's an explanation, at least," said Glinnes. "What about Rhamnotis? A gloomy desert of a place?"

"To the contrary." The commander swung about, fingered buttons; a screen burst into colors and a voice spoke: "Alastor 965, Rhamnotis. The physical characteristics are—" The annunciator read off a set of indices denoting mass, dimension, gravity, atmosphere and climate, while the screen displayed a Mercator projection of the surface. The commander touched buttons, to bypass historical and anthropological information, and brought in what was known as 'informal briefing': "Rhamnotis is a world where every particular, every aspect, every institution, conduces to the health and pleasure of its inhabitants. The original settlers, arriving from the world Triskelion, resolved never to tolerate the ugliness which they had left behind them, and they pledged a covenant to this effect, which covenant is now the prime document of Rhamnotis, and the subject of great reverence.

"Today the usual detritus of civilization: discord, filth, waste, structural clutter, have been almost expelled from the consciousness of the population. Rhamnotis is now a world characterized by excellent management. Optimums have become the norms. Social evils are unknown; poverty is no more than a curious word. The work-week is ten hours, in which every member of the population participates, and then devotes his surplus energy to the carnivals and fantasies, which attract tourists from far worlds. The cuisine is considered equal to the best of the cluster. Beaches, forests,

lakes and mountains provide unsurpassed scope for outdoor recreation. Hussade is a popular spectator sport, although local teams have never placed high in Cluster rankings."

The commander touched another button; the annunciator said: "In recent years the cult known as Tamarcho has attracted attention. The principles of Tamarcho are unclear, and seem to vary from individual to individual. In general, the Tamarchists engage in wanton violence, destruction and defilement. They have burned thousands of acres of primeval forests; they pollute lakes, reservoirs and fountains with corpses, filth and crude oil; they are known to have poisoned waterholes in game preserves, and they set poison bait for birds and domestic animals. They fling excrement-bombs into the perfumed carnival crowds and urinate from high towers upon the throngs below. They worship ugliness and in fact call themselves the Ugly People."

The commander tapped a button to dull the screen. "So there you have it. The Tamarcho have seized a tract of land and won't disperse; apparently the Rhamnotes have called in the Whelm. Still, it's all speculation; we might be going down to Breakneck Island to disperse the prostitutes; who knows?"

STANDARD STRATEGY of the Whelm, validated across ten thousand campaigns, was to mass a tremendous force, so extravagantly overpowering as to intimidate the enemy and impose upon him the certain conviction of defeat. In most cases the insurgency would evaporate and there would be no fighting whatever. To subdue Mad

King Zag on Gray World, Alastor 1740, the Whelm poised a thousand Tyrant dreadnoughts over the Black capitol almost to block out the daylight. Squadrons of Vavarangi and Stingers drifted in concentric revolutions under the Tyrants; and at still lower levels combat-boats darted back and forth like wasps. On the fifth day twenty million heavy troops dropped down to confront King Zag's stupefied militia, who long before had given up all thought of resistance.

The same tactics were expected to prevail against the Tamarchists. Four fleets of Tyrants and Maulers converged from four directions, to hover above the Silver Mountains where the Ugly People had taken refuge. Intelligence from the surface reported no perceptible reaction from the Tamarchists.

The Tyrants descended lower and all during the night netted the sky with ominous beams of crackling blue light. In the morning the Tamarchists had broken all their camps and were nowhere to be seen; surface intelligence reported that they had taken cover in the forests.

Monitors flew to the area, and their voice-horns ordered the Ugly Folk to form orderly files and march down to a nearby resort-town. The only response was a spatter of sniper fire.

With menacing deliberation the Tyrants began to descend; the Monitors issued a final ultimatum: surrender or face attack. The Tamarchists failed to respond.

Sixteen Armadillo sky-forts dropped upon a high meadow, intending to secure the area for a troop-landing.

They encountered not only the fire of small arms, but spasms of energy from a set of antique blue radiants. Rather than destroy an unknown number of maniacs, the Armadillos returned into the sky.

The Operation Commander, outraged and perplexed, decided to ring the Silver Mountain with troops and hope to starve the Ugly Folk into submission.

Twenty-two hundred landing craft, among them No. 191-539, commanded by Glinnes Hulden, descended to the surface and sealed the Tamarchists into their mountain lair. Where expedient the troops cautiously moved up the valleys, after sending Stinger combat-boats ahead to flush out snipers. Casualties occurred and since the Tamarcho represented neither threat nor emergency, the Commander withdrew his troops from zones of Tamarchist fire.

For a month the siege persisted. Intelligence reported that the Tamarchist lacked provisions, that they were eating bark, insects, leaves, whatever came to hand.

The Commander again sent Monitors over the area, demanding an orderly surrender. For answer the Tamarchists launched a series of break-out attempts, but were repulsed with considerable harm to themselves.

The Commander once more sent over his Monitors, threatening the use of pain-gas unless surrender was effected within six hours. The deadline came and went; Vavarangi descended to bombard shelter areas with cannisters of pain-gas. Choking, rolling on the ground, writhing and jerking, the Ta-

marchists broke into the open. The Commander ordered down a 'living rain' of a hundred thousand troops; after a few brisk fire-fights the area was secure. The Tamarchist captives numbered less than two thousand persons of both sexes. Glinnes was astounded to discover that some were little more than children and very few older than himself. They lacked ammunition, energy, food and medical supplies; they grimaced and snarled at the Whelm troops; 'Ugly Folk' they were indeed. Glinnes' astonishment increased. What had prompted these young people to battle so fanatically for a cause so obviously lost? What, indeed, had impelled them to become Ugly Folk; why had they defiled and befouled, destroyed and corrupted?

Glinnes attempted to question one of the prisoners, who pretended not to understand his dialect; shortly thereafter Glinnes was ordered back aloft with his ship.

GLINNES RETURNED to base. Picking up his mail he found a letter from Shira, containing tragic news. Jut Hulden had gone out to hunt merling once too often; they had laid a cunning trap for him. Before Shira could come to his aid Jut had been dragged into Farwan Water.

The news affected Glinnes with a rather irrational astonishment; he found it hard to imagine change in the timeless fens, especially change so profound.

Shira was now Squire of Rabendary. Glinnes wondered what other changes might be in store. Probably none; Shira had no taste for innovation . . . He

would bring in a wife and breed a family; so much at least could be expected: if not sooner, then later. Glinnes speculated as to who might marry bulky balding Shira, with the red cheeks and lumpy nose. Even as a hussade player, Shira had found difficulty enticing girls into the shadows, for while Shira considered himself bluff, friendly and affable, others thought him coarse, lewd and boisterous.

Glinnes began to muse of his boyhood. He recalled the hazy mornings, the festive evenings, the starwatchings. He recalled his good friends and their quaint habits; he remembered the look of Rabendary Forest: the menas looming over russet pomanders, silver-green birches, dark-green pricklenuts. He thought of the shimmer which hung above the water and softened the outline of far shores; he thought of the ramshackle old family home, and discovered himself to be profoundly homesick.

Two months later, at the end of ten years' service, he resigned his commission and returned to Trullion.

CHAPTER 4

G LINNES HAD SENT a letter announcing his arrival, but when he debarked at Port Maheul in Straveny Prefecture none of his family was on hand to greet him, which he thought strange.

He loaded his baggage upon the ferry and took a seat on the top deck, to watch the scenery go by. How easy and gay were the country-folk in their parays of dull scarlet, blue, ocher! Glin-

nes' semi-military garments: black jacket, beige breeches tucked into black ankle-boots, felt stiff and constricted. He'd probably never wear them again!

The boat presently slid into the dock at Welgen. A delectable odor wafted past Glinnes' nose. A nearby fried fish booth was responsible. Glinnes went ashore and bought a packet of steamed reed-pods and a length of barbequed eel. He looked about for Shira or Glay or Marucha, though he hardly expected to find them here. A group of off-worlders attracted his attention: three young men wearing what seemed to be a uniform: neat gray one-piece garments, belted at the waist, highly polished tight black shoes, and three young women in rather austere gowns of durable white duck. Both men and women wore their hair cropped short, in not-unbecoming style, and wore small medallions on their left shoulders. They passed close to Glinnes and he realized that they were not off-worlders after all, but Trills . . . Students at a doctrinaire academy? Members of a religious order? Either case was possible, for they carried books, calculators and seemed to be engaged in earnest discussion. Glinnes gave the girls a second appraisal. There was, he thought, something unappealing about them, which at first he could not define. The ordinary Trill girl dressed herself in almost anything at hand, without over-anxiety that it might be rumpled, or thread-bare or soiled, and then made herself gay with flowers . . . These girls looked not only clean, but fastidious as well. Too clean, too fastidious . . . Glinnes shrugged and returned to the ferry.

The ferry moved on into the heart of the fens, along waterways dank with the scent of still water, decaying reed-stalks, and occasionally a hint of a rich fetor suggesting the presence of merling. Rigil Broad appeared ahead and a cluster of shacks that was Saurkash: the end of the line for Glinnes; here the ferry veered north for the villages along Great Vole Island. Glinnes unloaded his cases onto the dock, and for a moment stood looking around the village. The most prominent feature was the hussade field and its dilapidated old bleachers, once the home-field of the Saurkash Serpents. Almost adjacent was the Magic Tench, the most pleasant of Saurkash's three taverns. He walked down the dock to the office where ten years before Milo Harrad had rented boats and operated a water-taxi.

Harrad was nowhere to be seen. A young man whom Glinnes did not know sat dozing in the shade.

"Good day, friend," said Glinnes, and the young man, awaking, turned Glinnes a look of mild reproach. "Can you take me out to Rabendary Island?"

"Whenever you like." The young man looked Glinnes slowly up and down and lurched to his feet. "You'd be Glinnes Huldén, unless I'm mistaken."

"Quite right. But I don't remember you."

"You'd have no reason to do so. I'm old Harrad's nephew from Voulash. They call me young Harrad, and I expect that's what I'll be the rest of my life. I mind when you played for the Serpents."

"That's some time ago. You've got an accurate memory."

"Not all that good. The Huldens have always been hussade types. Old Harrad talked much of Jut, the best rover Saurkash ever produced, or so said old Milo. Shira was a solid guard, right enough, but slow in the jumps. I doubt I ever saw him make a clean swing."

"That's a fair judgment." Glinnes looked along the waterway. "I expected him here to meet me, or my brother Glay. Evidently they had better things to do."

Young Harrad glanced at him sidewise, then shrugged and brought one of his neat green and white skiffs to the dock. Glinnes loaded his cases aboard and they set off eastward along Mellish Water.

Young Harrad cleared his throat. "You expected Shira to meet you?"

"I did indeed."

"You didn't hear about Shira then?"

"What happened to him?"

"He disappeared."

"Disappeared?" Glinnes looked around with a slack jaw. "Where?"

"No one knows. To the merling's dinner-table, likely enough. That's where most folk disappear."

"Unless they go off to visit friends."*

"For two months? Shira was a great horn, so I've been told, but two months on cauch would be quite extraordinary."

Glinnes gave a despondent grunt and turned away, no longer in the mood for conversation. Jut gone, Shira gone; his homecoming could only be a melancholy occasion. The scenery, ever more familiar, ever more rich with memories,

now only served to increase his gloom. Islands he knew well slid by on each side: Jurzy Island, where the Jurzy Lightning-bolts, his first team, had practised; Calceon Island, where lovely Loel Zarchione had resisted his most urgent blandishments and then become sheirl for the Gaspar Triptanes, and finally, after her shaming, had wed young Lord Clois from Graven Table, north of the fens . . . Memories thronged his mind; he wondered why had he ever departed the fens, his ten years in the Whelm already seemed no more than a dream. The boat moved out upon Seaward Broad. To the south at the end of a mile's perspective, stood Near Island; and beyond, somewhat wider and higher, Middle Island, and yet beyond, still wider, still higher, Far Island: three silhouettes obscured by water-haze in three distinct degrees, Far Island showing only slightly more substance than the sky at the southern horizon.

The boat slid into narrow Athenry Water, with hushberry trees leaning together to form an arch over the still dark water. Here the scent of merling was noticeable. Harrad and Glinnes both watched for water swirls. For reasons known best to themselves merlings gathered in Athenry Water: perhaps for the hushberries which were poisonous to men, perhaps for the shade, perhaps for the savor of hushberry roots in the water. The surface lay placid and cool; if merlings were nearby, they kept to their burrows. The boat passed out upon Fleharish Broad. On Five Islands to the south Thammas Lord Gensifer maintained his ancient manse. Not far away a sailboat rode

*A euphemism for cauch-crazy lovers going off to camp in the wilds.

high across the Broad on hydrofoils; at the tiller sat Lord Gensifer himself. Lord Gensifer, a hearty round-faced man ten years older than Glinnes, was burly of shoulder and chest, but somewhat thin in the legs. He tacked smartly and came foaming up on a reach beside Harrad's boat, then luffed his sail. The boat dropped from its foils and rode flat in the water. "If I'm not mistaken it's young Glinnes Hulden, back from star-faring!" Lord Gensifer called out. "Welcome back to the fens!"

Glinnes and Harrad both rose to their feet and performed the salute due a lord of Gensifer's quality.

"Thank you," said Glinnes. "I'm glad to be back, no doubt about that."

"There's no place like the fens! And what are your plans for the old place?"

Glinnes was puzzled. "Plans? None in particular. . . Should I have plans?"

"I would presume so. After all, you're now Squire of Rabendary."

Glinnes squinted across the water, off toward Rabendary Island. "I suppose I am for a fact, if Shira is truly dead. I'm older than Glay by an hour."

"And a good job too, if you want my opinion. . . Ha, humm. You'll see for yourself, no doubt." Lord Gensifer drew in the sheet. "What about hussade? Are you for the new club? We'd certainly like a Hulden on the team."

"I don't know anything about it, Lord Gensifer. I'm so bewildered by the turn of affairs I can't give any sensible answer."

"In due course, in due course." Lord Gensifer sheeted home the sail; the hull, surging forward, rose on its foils and

skimmed across Fleharish Broad at great speed.

"There's sport for you," said young Harrad enviously. "He had that contraption brought out from Illucante by Inter-world; think of the ozols it cost him!"

"It looks dangerous," said Glinnes. "If it goes over, he and the merlings are out there alone."

"Lord Gensifer is a dare-devil sort of chap," said Harrad. "Still they say the craft is safe enough. It can't sink, first of all, even if it did go over. He could always ride the hull until someone picked him up."

They continued across Fleharish Broad and out into Ilfish Water, with Prefecture Free Common on their left: an island of five hundred acres reserved for the use of casual wanderers, Trevanyi, Wrye, lovers 'visiting friends'. The Commons now seemed to be deserted. Glinnes, brooding about his startling new responsibilities, hardly noticed his surroundings until the boat entered Ambal Broad, and there ahead: the dear friendly outline of Rabendary Island: home. Glinnes blinked at the moisture which came to his eyes. A sad home-coming in truth. Ambal Isle looked its loveliest. Looking toward the old manor Glinnes thought to perceive a wisp of smoke rising from the chimneys. A startling theory came to account for Lord Gensifer's sniff: had Glay taken up residence in the manor? Lord Gensifer would consider such an action ridiculous and discreditable: a vulgarian trying to ape his betters.

The boat pulled up to Rabendary dock; Glinnes unloaded his luggage, paid off young Harrad. He stared

toward the house. Had it always lurched and sagged? Had the weeds always grown so rank? And the mazanill thatch: infected with black rot! There was a condition of comfortable shabbiness which the Trifls considered endearing; the old house had gone far past this state. As he mounted the steps to the verandah they groaned and sagged under his weight. Flecks of color caught his eye, across the field near Rabendary Forest. Glinnes squinted and focused his gaze. Three tents: red, black, dull orange. Trevanyi tents. Glinnes shook his head in angry disparagement. He had not returned too soon. He called out: "Hallo the house! Who's here but me?"

In the doorway appeared the tall figure of his mother. She looked at him incredulously, then ran forward a few steps. "Glinnes! How strange to see you!"

Glinnes hugged and kissed her, ignoring the overtones of the remark. "Yes I'm back, and it feels strange to me too. Where is Glay?"

"He's off with one of his comrades. But how well you look! You've grown into a very fine man!"

"You haven't changed by so much as a twitch; you're still my beautiful mother."

"Oh Glinnes, such flattery; I feel old as the hills and I look it too I'm sure . . . I suppose you've heard the sad news?"

"About Shira? Yes. It grieves me terribly. Doesn't anyone know what happened?"

"Nothing is known," said Marucha rather primly. "But sit down, Glinnes; take off those fine boots and rest your

feet. Would you care for apple wine?"

"I would indeed, and a bite of whatever is handy; I'm ravenous."

Marucha served wine, bread, a cold mince of meat, fruit and sea-jelly. She sat watching him eat. "It's so very nice to see you. What are your plans?"

Glinnes thought her voice almost imperceptibly cool. Still, Marucha had never been demonstrative. He answered: "I don't have any plans whatever; I've only just heard about Shira from young Harrad. He never took a wife then?"

Marucha's mouth pursed into a disapproving line. "He could never quite make up his mind. . . He had friends here and there, naturally."

Again Glinnes sensed unspoken words, knowledge which his mother did not care to communicate. He began to feel a few small inklings of resentment, and carefully put them aside. It would not do to start out his new life on such a footing. Marucha asked in bright, rather brittle, voice. "But where is your uniform? I so wanted to see you as a captain in the Whelm."

"I resigned my commission. I decided to come home."

"Oh." Marucha's voice was flat. "Of course we're glad to have you home, but are you sure it's wise giving up your career?"

"I've already given it up." In spite of his resolve, Glinnes' voice had taken on an edge. "I'm needed here more than in the Whelm. The old place is falling apart. Doesn't Glay do anything whatever?"

"He's been most busy with—well, his activities. In his own way, he's quite an important person now."

"That shouldn't prevent him from fixing the steps. They're literally rotting away. . . Or—I saw smoke from Ambal Isle—is Glay living over there?"

"No; we've sold Ambal Isle, to one of Glay's friends."

Glinnes stared thunderstruck. "You've sold Ambal Isle? What possible reason. . . ?" He gathered his thoughts. "Shira sold Ambal Isle?"

"No," said Marucha in a cool voice. "Glay and I decided to let it go."

"But. . . ." Glinnes halted and chose his words deliberately. "I certainly don't want to part with Ambal Isle nor any other part of our land."

"I'm afraid that the sale has been effected. We assumed that you were making a career in the Whelm and wouldn't be home. Naturally we would have considered your feelings had we known."

Glinnes spoke politely. "I most definitely feel that we should void the contract.* We certainly don't want to give up Ambal."

"But my dear Glinnes, it's already given up."

"Not after we return the money. Where is it?"

"You'll have to ask Glay."

Glinnes reflected upon the sardonic Glay of ten years before, who always had stayed aloof from the affairs of Rabendary. That Glay should now

make large decisions seemed altogether inappropriate and more, insulting to the memory of his father Jut, who loved each square inch of his land.

Glinnes asked: "How much did you take for Ambal?"

"Twelve thousand ozols."

Glinnes' voice cracked with angry astonishment. "That's giving it away! For a beauty spot like Ambal Isle, with a manor house in good condition? Someone's insane!"

Marucha's black eyes sparkled. "Surely it's not your place to protest. You weren't there when we needed you, and it isn't proper for you to cavil now."

"I'm doing more than cavil; I'm going to void the contract. If Shira is dead, I'm squire of Rabendary and no one else has authority to sell."

"But we won't know that Shira is dead," Marucha pointed out, sweetly reasonable. "He may only have gone off to visit friends."

Glinnes asked politely, "Do you know of any such 'friends'?"

Marucha gave her shoulder a disdainful jerk. "Not really. But you remember Shira. He has never changed."

"After two months he'd surely be home from his visit."

"Naturally we hope that he is alive; in fact we can't presume him dead for four years, which is the law."

"But by then the contract will be firm! Why should we part with any of our wonderful land?"

"We needed the money; isn't that reason enough?"

"You needed money for what?"

"You'll have to ask that question of Glay."

*By Trill law a contract for land sale is considered provisional for a period of a year, for the protection of both parties.

"I'll do so. Where is he?"

"I really don't know. He'll probably be home before too long."

"Another matter: are those Trevanyi tents down by the forest?"

Marucha nodded. By now, neither was making any pretense of amiability. "Please don't criticize either me or Glay. Shira allowed them upon the property, and they have done no harm."

"Possibly not, but the year is young. You know our last experience with Trevanyi. They stole the kitchen cutlery."

"The Drossets are not that sort," said Marucha. "For Trevanyi they seem quite responsible. No doubt they're as honest as they find necessary."

Glinnes threw up his hands. "It's pointless to wrangle. But one last word about Ambal. Certainly Shira would never have wanted the Isle sold. If he's alive you acted without his authorization. If he's dead, you acted without mine, and I insist that the contract be voided."

Marucha gave a cold shrug of her slender white shoulders. "This is a matter you must take up with Glay; I am really quite bored with the subject."

"Who bought Ambal Isle?"

"A person named Lute Casagave, very quiet and distinguished. I believe that he's an off-worlder; he's much too genteel to be a Trill."

Glinnes finished his meal, then went to his baggage. "I've brought a few oddments back with me." He gave his mother a parcel, which she took without comment. "Open it," said Glinnes. "It's for you."

She pulled the tab and drew forth a length of purple fabric embroidered with fantastic birds in thread of green, silver and gold. "How utterly wonderful!" she gasped. "Why Glinnes—what a delightful gift!"

"That's not all," said Glinnes. He brought forth other parcels, which Marucha opened in a rapture. Unlike the ordinary Trill, she delighted in precious possessions.

"These are star-crystals," said Glinnes. "They haven't any other name, but they're found just like this, facets and all, in the dust of dead stars. Nothing can scratch them, not even diamond, and they have very peculiar optical properties."

"My, how heavy they are!"

"This is an antique vase, no one knows how old. The writing on the bottom is said to be Erdish."

"It's charming!"

"Now this isn't very distinguished; just something that caught my fancy, a nut-cracker in the shape of an Urtland crotchet. I picked it up in a junk-shop, if the truth be known."

"But how cunning. It's for cracking nuts, you say?"

"Yes. You put the nuts between these mandibles and press down the tail . . . These were for Glay and Shira—knives forged from proteum. The cutting edges are single chains of interlocked molecules: absolutely indestructible; you can strike them into steel and they never dull."

"Glay will be delighted," said Marucha in a voice somewhat stiffer than before. "And Shira will also be pleased."

Glinnes gave a skeptical snort, which

Marucha took pains to ignore. "Thank you very much for the gifts; I think they're all wonderful." She looked out the door, down across the verandah to the dock. "Here is Glay now."

Glinnes went out to stand on the verandah. Glay, coming up the path from the dock, halted, though he showed no surprise. Then he came forward slowly; Glinnes descended the steps and the brothers clapped each other's shoulders.

Glay was wearing, so Glinnes noted, not the usual Trill paray, but gray trousers and dark jacket.

"Welcome home," said Glay. "I met young Harrad; he told me you were here."

"I'm glad to be home," said Glinnes. "With just you and Marucha, it must have been gloomy. But now that I'm here I hope we can make the house the place it used to be."

Glay gave a non-committal nod. "Yes. Life has been somewhat quiet. And things change, certainly; I hope for the better."

Glinnes was not sure he knew what Glay was talking about. "There's a great deal to discuss. But first: I'm glad to see you. You're looking remarkably wise and mature, and—what would be the word—self-possessed."

Glay laughed. "When I look back, I see that I always pondered too much and tried to resolve too many paradoxes. I've given all that up; I've cut the Gordian knot, so to speak."

"How so?"

Glay made a deprecatory gesture. "It's too complicated to go into right now . . . You look well too. The Whelm has been good for you. When must you

go back?"

"Into the Whelm? Never. I'm through, since I now seem to be Squire of Rabendary."

"Yes," said Glay in a colorless voice. "You've got an hour's edge on me."

"Come inside," said Glinnes. "I've brought you a gift. Also something for Shira. Do you think he's dead?"

Glay nodded gloomily. "There's no other explanation."

"That's my feeling. Mother feels he's 'visiting friends'."

"For two months? Not a chance."

The two entered the house, and Glinnes brought out the knife he had bought at the Technical Laboratories in Boreal City, on Maranian. "Be careful of the edge. You can't touch it without slicing yourself. But you can hack through a steel rod without damage."

Glay picked up the knife gingerly, and squinted along the invisible edge. "It frightens me."

"Yes, it's almost weird. Now that Shira's dead I'll keep the other one for myself."

Marucha spoke from across the room. "We're not sure that Shira is dead."

Neither Glay nor Glinnes made response. Glay put his knife on the mantelpiece of smoke-darkened old kaban. Glinnes took a seat. We'd better clear the air about Ambal Isle."

Glay leaned back against the wall and inspected Glinnes with somber eyes. "There's nothing to say. For better or worse I sold it to Lute Casagave."

"The sale was not only unwise, it was illegal. I intend to void the contract."

"Indeed. How will you proceed?"

"We'll return the money and ask Casagave to leave. The process is very simple."

"If you have twelve thousand ozols."

"I don't—but you do."

Gl原因 shook his head. "No longer."

"Where is the money?"

"I gave it away."

"To whom?"

"To a man called Junius Farfan. I gave it; he took it; I can't get it back."

"I think that we should go to see Junius Farfan, at this very moment."

Gl原因 shook his head. "Please don't begrudge me this money. You have your share; you are Squire of Rabendary. Let me have Ambal Isle as my share."

"There's no question of shares, or who owns what," said Glinnes. You and I both own Rabendary; it's our home-place. You simply have no right to sell part of our home-place."

"That certainly is a valid point of view," said Gl原因. "But I choose to think differently. As I told you before, changes are coming over the land."

Glinnes sat back, unable to find words to convey his indignation.

"Let it rest there," said Gl原因 wearily. "I took Ambal, you've got Rabendary. It's only fair after all. I'll now move out and leave you in the full enjoyment of your holding."

Glinnes tried to cry out a dissent; the words clogged in his throat. He could only say: "The choice is yours. I hope you'll change your mind."

Gl原因's response was a cryptic smile which Glinnes understood to mean no response at all. "Another matter," said Glinnes. "What of the Trevanyi

yonder?"

"They are folk I traveled about with: the Drossets. Do you object to their presence?"

"They're your friends. If you insist upon changing your residence, why not take your friends with you!"

"I don't quite know where I'm going," said Gl原因. "If you want them gone simply tell them so. You're Squire of Rabendary, not I."

Marucha spoke from her chair. "He's not squire until we know about Shira!"

"Shira is dead," said Gl原因.

"Still, Glinnes has no right to come home and instantly make difficulties. I vow he's as obstinate as Shira and as hard as his father."

Glinnes said, "I've made no difficulties; you've made them. I've got to find twelve thousand ozols somewhere to save Ambal Isle, then evict a band of Trevanyi before they call in their whole clan. It's lucky I came home when I did, while we've still got a home."

Gl原因 stonily poured himself a mug of apple wine. He seemed only bored . . . From across the field came a groaning creaking sound, then a tremendous crash. Glinnes went to look from the end of the verandah. He turned back to Gl原因. "Your friends have just cut down one of our oldest barchnut trees."

"One of your trees," said Gl原因 with a faint smile.

"You won't ask them to leave?"

"They wouldn't heed me. I owe them favors."

"Do they have names?"

"The het is Vang Drosset. His woman is Tingo. The sons are Ashmor and Harving. The daughter is Duissane.

The crone is Immifalda."

Going to his luggage, Glinnes brought forth his service hand-gun, which he dropped into his pocket. Glay watched with a sardonic droop to his lips, then muttered something to Marucha.

Glinnes marched off across the meadow. The pleasant pale light of afternoon seemed to clarify all the close colors and invest the distances with a luminous shimmer. Glinnes' heart swelled with many emotions: grief, longing for the old sweet times, anger with Glay which surged past his attempts to subdue it.

He approached the camp. Six pair of eyes watched his every step, appraised his every aspect. The camp was none too clean, although, on the other hand, it was not too dirty; Glinnes had seen worse. Two fires were burning. At one of these a boy turned a spit stuck full with plump young wood-hens. A cauldron over the other fire emitted an acrid herbal stench: the Drossets were preparing a batch of Trevanyi beer, which eventually colored their eyeballs a startling golden-yellow. The woman stirring the mess was stern and keen-featured. Her hair had been dyed bright red and hung in two plaits down her back. Glinnes moved to avoid the reek.

A man approached from the fallen tree, where he had been gathering barchnuts. Two hulking young men ambled behind him. All three wore black breeches tucked into sagging black boots, loose shirts of beige silk, colored neckerchiefs: typical Trevanyi costume. Vang Drosset wore a flat black hat from which his taffy-colored hair burst forth in exuberant curls. His

skin was an odd biscuit-brown; his eyes glowed yellow, as if illuminated from behind. Altogether an impressive man, and not a person to be trifled with, thought Glinnes. He said, "You are Vang Drosset? I am Glinnes Hulden, Squire of Rabendary Island. I must ask you to move your camp."

Vang Drosset motioned to his sons, who brought forward a pair of wickers chairs. "Sit and take refreshment," said Vang Drosset. "We will discuss our leaving."

Glinnes smiled and shook his head. "I must stand." If he sat and drank their tea, he became beholden and they then could ask for favors. He glanced past Vang Drosset to the boy turning the spit, and now he saw that it was not a boy, but a slender shapely girl of seventeen or eighteen. Vang Drosset spoke a syllable over his shoulder; the girl rose to her feet and went to the dull red tent. As she entered she turned a glance back over her shoulders; Glinnes glimpsed a pretty face, with eyes naturally golden, and golden-red curls which clung about her head, and dangled past her ears to her neck.

Vang Drosset grinned, showing a set of gleaming white teeth. "As to moving camp, I beg that you give us leave to remain. We do no harm here."

"I'm not so sure. Trevanyi make uncomfortable neighbors. Beasts and fowl disappear, and other items as well."

"We have stolen neither beast nor fowl." Vang Drosset's voice was gentle.

"You have just destroyed a grand tree, and only to pick the nuts more easily."

"The forest is full of trees. We needed firewood. Surely it is no great

matter."

"Not to you. Do you know I played in that tree when I was a boy? Look! See where I carved my mark! In that crotch I built an eyrie, where sometimes I slept at nights. That tree I loved!"

Vang Drosset gave a delicate grimace, at the idea of a man loving a tree. His two sons laughed contemptuously and turning away began to throw knives at a target.

Glinnes continued. "Firewood? The forest is full of dead wood. You need only carry it here."

"A very long distance for folk with sore backs."

Glinnes pointed to the spit: "Those fowl: only half-grown; none have raised a brood. We hunt only the three-year birds, which no doubt you've already killed and eaten and the two-year birds as well, and after you devour the yearlings none will be left. And there, on that platter, the ground-fruit. You've pulled up entire clumps, roots and all; you've destroyed our future crop! You say you do no harm? You brutalize the land; it won't be the same for ten years. Strike your tents, load your wagons* and go."

Vang spoke in a subdued voice: "This is not gracious language, Squire Hulden."

"How does one graciously order a man off his property?" asked Glinnes. "It can't be done. You require too much."

Vang Drosset swung away with a hiss of exasperation and stared off across the meadow. Ashmor and Harving

were now engaged in a startling Trevanyi exercise which Glinnes had never before witnessed. They stood about thirty feet apart and each in turn threw a knife at the other's head. He toward whom the knife was aimed flicked up his own knife to catch the hurled knife in some miraculous manner and send it spinning into the air.

"Trevanyi make good friends but bad enemies," said Vang Drosset in a soft voice.

Glinnes replied, "Perhaps you have heard the proverb: 'East of Zanzamar* live the friendly Trevanyi.'"

Vang Drosset spoke in a voice of spurious humility: "But we are not all that baneful! We will add to the pleasures of Rabendary Island. We will play music at your feasts; we are adepts at the knife dances . . ." He twitched his fingers at his two sons, who hopped and jerked and swung their knives in shivering arcs.

By accident, by jocular or murderous design, a knife darted at Glinnes' head. Vang Drosset cawed, in either warning or exultation. Glinnes had been expecting some such demonstration. He ducked; the knife struck into a target behind him. Glinnes' gun jerked out and spat blue plasma. The end of the spit flared and the birds dropped into the coals.

From the tent darted the girl Duissane, her eyes projecting a dazzle as fierce as that of the gun. She snatched at the spit and burned her hand; she rolled the birds out on the ground with a stick, all the time crying out curses and invective: "Oh you

*Trevanyi wagons are ponderous boats with wheels, capable on either land or water.

*Zanzamar: a town at the far eastern tip of Cape Sunrise.

wicked urush*, you've spoiled our meal! May your tongue grow a beard; and you with your vile paunch full of dog-guts; get away from the place before we name you a stiff-leg Fanscher. We know you, never fear! You're a worse spageen* than your horn of a brother; there were few like him . . ."

Vang Drosset held up his clenched hand; the girl closed her mouth and grimly began to clean the birds. Vang Drosset turned back to Glinnes, a hard smile on his face. "That was not a kind act," he said. "Did you not enjoy the knife games?"

"Not particularly," said Glinnes. He brought out his own new knife, and pulling the Trevanyi knife from the target, sliced off a shaving as if he were paring a withe. The Drossets stared in fascination. Glinnes sheathed the knife.

"The common land is only a mile down Ilfish Water," said Glinnes. "You can camp there to no one's detriment."

"We came here from the Common," cried Duissane. "The spageen Shira invited us; isn't that good enough for you?"

Glinnes could not comprehend the basis for Shira's generosity. "I thought it was Glay you traveled with."

Vang Drosset made another gesture; Duissane turned on her heel and took the birds to a serving table.

"Tomorrow we go our way," said Vang Drosset in a plangent fateful voice. "*Forlostwenna** is on us, in any event; we are ready for departure."

"You may well fall in with Glay," said Glinnes. "*Forlostwenna* is on him as well."

Vang Drosset spat into the dirt. "It's Fanscherade which is on him. He's now too good for us."

"Too good for you as well," muttered Harving.

Fanscherade? The word meant nothing, but he would solicit no instruction from the Drossets. He spoke a word of farewell and turned away. As he crossed the field six pairs of eyes stung his back; he was relieved to pass beyond the range of a thrown knife.

CHAPTER 5

AVNESS WAS the name of that pale hour immediately before sunset: a sad quiet time when all color seemed to have drained from the world, and the landscape revealed no dimensions other than those suggested by receding planes of ever paler haze. Avness, like dawn, was a time unsympathetic to the Trill temperament; the Trills had no taste for melancholy reverie.

Glinnes found the house empty upon his return: both Glay and Marucha had departed. Glinnes was plunged into a state of gloom. He went out on the verandah and looked toward the Drosset tents, half of a mind to call them over for a farewell feast, or more particularly Duissane, beyond dispute a fascinating creature, bad temper and all. Glinnes pictured her as she might look in a kindly mood . . . Duissane would enliven any occasion . . . An absurd

*urush: derogatory Trevanyish cant for a Trill.

*spag: state of rut, hence *spageen*: individual in such a condition.

**Forlostwenna*: a word from the Trevanyi jargon: an urgent mood compelling departure; more immediate than the general term 'wanderlust'.

idea. Vang Drosset would cut his heart out at the mere suspicion.

Glinnes went back into the house and poured himself a draught of wine. He opened the larder and considered the sparse contents. How different from the open-hearted bounty he remembered from the happy old times! . . . He heard the gurgle and hiss of a prow cutting water. Going out upon the verandah, Glinnes watched the approaching boat. It contained not Marucha, whom he expected, but a thin long-armed man with narrow shoulders and sharp elbows, in a suit of dark brown and blue velvet, cut after that fashion favored by the aristocrats. Wispy brown hair hung almost to his shoulders; his face was mild and gentle, with a hint of impish mischief in the cast of his eyes and the quirk of his mouth. Glinnes recognized Janno Akadie the mentor, whom he remembered as voluble, facetious, at times mordant or even malicious, never at a loss for an epigram, an allusion, a profundity, which impressed many, but irked Jut Hulden.

Glinnes walked down to the dock and catching the mooring line made the boat fast to the bollard. Jumping nimbly ashore Akadie gave Glinnes an effusive greeting. "I heard you were home and couldn't rest till I saw you. A pleasure having you back among us!"

Glinnes gave polite acknowledgment to the compliments, and Akadie nodded more cordially than ever. "I fear we've had changes since your departure—perhaps not all of them to your liking.

"I really haven't had time to make up my mind," said Glinnes cautiously, but Akadie paid no attention and looked up

at the dim house. "Your dear mother is away from home?"

"I don't know where she is, but come drink a pot or two of wine."

Akadie made an acquiescent gesture. The two walked up the dock toward the house. . . . Akadie glanced toward Rabendary Forest, where the Drosset's fire showed as a flickering orange spark. "The Trevanyi are still on hand, I notice."

"They leave tomorrow."

Akadie nodded sagely. "The girl is charming but fey: that is to say, burdened with a weight of destiny. I wonder for whom she carries her message."

Glinnes lofted his eyebrows; he had not thought of Duissane in so dire a connection, and Akadie's remark struck reverberations within himself. "As you say, she seems an extraordinary person."

Akadie settled into one of the old string chairs on the verandah. Glinnes brought out wine, cheese and nuts, and they sat back to watch the wan colors of the Trullion sunset.

"I take it you are home on leave?"

"No. I've left the Whelm. I now seem to be Squire of Rabendary—unless Shira returns, which no one considers likely."

"Two months is indeed an ominous period," said Akadie, somewhat sententiously.

"What do you think became of him?"

Akadie sipped his wine. "I know no more than you, in spite of my reputation."

"Quite bluntly, I find the situation incomprehensible," said Glinnes. "Why did Glay sell Ambal? I can't understand

it; he'll neither explain nor give back the money so that I can void the contract. I never expected to find so troublesome a situation. What is your opinion on all this?"

Akadie placed his mug delicately upon the table. "Are you consulting me professionally? It might well be money wasted, since, offhand, I see no remedy for your difficulties."

Glinnes heaved a patient sigh; here again: the Akadie with whom he never quite knew how to deal. He said: "If you can make yourself useful, I'll pay you." And he had the satisfaction of seeing Akadie purse his lips.

Akadie arranged his thoughts. "Hmfm. Naturally I can't charge you for casual gossip. I must make myself useful, as you put it. Sometimes the distinction between social grace and professional help is narrow. I suggest that we put this occasion on one basis or another."

"You can call it a consultation," said Glinnes, "since the matter has come to rest on these terms."

"Very well. What do you wish to consult about?"

"The general situation. I want to get a grip on affairs, but I'm working in the dark. First of all: Ambal Isle, which Glay had no right to sell."

"No problem here. Return the payment and void the contract."

"Glay won't give me the money. I don't have twelve thousand ozols of my own."

"A difficult situation," agreed Akadie. "Shira, of course, refused to sell. The deal was made only after his disappearance."

"Hmmm. What are you suggesting?"

"Nothing whatever. I'm supplying facts from which you can draw whatever inferences you like."

"Who is Lute Casagave?"

"I don't know. Superficially he seems a gentleman of quiet tastes, who takes an amateur's interest in local genealogy. He's compiling a conspectus of the local nobility, or so he tells me. His motives might well be other than pure scholarship, it goes without saying. Might he be trying to establish a claim upon one or another of the local titles? If so, interesting events will be forthcoming . . . Hmm. What else do I know of the mysterious Lute Casagave? He claims to be a Bole from Ellent, which is Alastor 485, as you're no doubt aware. I have my doubts."

"How so?"

"I am an observant man, as you know. After my little lunch at his manor I consulted my references. I found that, oddly enough, the great majority of Boles are left-handed. Casagave is right-handed. Most Boles are devoutly religious and their place of perdition is the Black Ocean at the South Pole of Ellent; submarine creatures house the souls of the damned. On Ellent, to eat wet food is to encompass within oneself a clutch of vile influences. No Bole eats fish. Yet Lute Casagave quite placidly enjoyed a stew of sea-spider, and afterwards a fine grilled duck-fish, no less than I. Is Lute Casagave a Bole?" Akadie held out his hands. "I don't know."

"But why should he pretend to a false identity? Unless—"

"Exactly. Still the explanation may be quite ordinary. Perhaps he is an emancipated Bole. Over-subtlety is an

error as gross as innocence."

"No doubt. Well, this to the side. I still can't give him his money because Glay won't return it. Do you know where it is?"

"I do." Akadie darted a side glance toward Glinnes. "I must remark that this is Class Two information and I must calculate your fee accordingly."

"Quite all right," said Glinnes. "If it seems exorbitant you can always recalculate. Where is the money?"

"Glay paid it to a man named Junius Farfan, who lives in Welgen."

Glinnes frowned off across Ambal Broad. "I've heard that name before."

"Quite likely. He is secretary of the local Fanschers."

"Oh? Why should Glay give him the money? Is Glay a Fanscher as well?"

"If not, he is on the brink. So far he does not affect the mannerisms and idiosyncracies."

Glinnes had a sudden insight. "The odd gray clothes? The shorn hair?"

"These are overt symbols. The movement has naturally provoked an angry reaction, and not unreasonably. The precepts of Fanscherade directly contradict conventional attitudes and must be considered anti-social."

"This means nothing to me," Glinnes grumbled. "I've never heard of Fanscherade till today."

Akadie spoke in his most didactic voice: "The name derives from old Glottisch: *Fan* is a corybantic celebration of glory. The thesis appears to be no more than an insipid truism: life is a commodity so precious that it must be used to best advantage. Who could argue otherwise? The Fanschers engender hostility when they try to im-

plement the idea. They feel that each person must establish exalted goals, and fulfill them if he can. If he fails, he fails honorably and has satisfaction in his striving; he has used his life well. If he wins—" Akadie made a wry gesture. "Who in this life ever wins? Death wins. Still—Fanscherade is at its basis a glorious ideal."

Glinnes made a skeptical sound. "Five trillion folk of Alastor, all striving and straining? There'd be peace for no one."

Akadie gave a smiling nod. "Understand this: Fanscherade is not a policy for five trillion. Fanscherade is one single outcry of wild despair, the loneliness of a single man lost among an infinity of infinities. Through Fanscherade the one man defies and rejects anonymity; he insists upon his personal magnificence." Akadie paused, then made a wry grimace. "One might remark, parenthetically, that the only truly fulfilled Fanscher is the Con-natic." He sipped his wine.

The sun had set; overhead hung a high layer of frosty green cirrus; to south and north were wisps and tufts of melancholy rose, violet and citron. For a period the two men sat in silence.

Akadie spoke in a soft voice, "So then: that is Fanscherade. Few Fanschers comprehend their new creed; after all most are children distressed by the sloth, the erotic excesses, the irresponsibility, the slovenly appearance of their parents. They deplore the cauch, the wine, the gluttonous feasts, which are consumed in the name of immediacy and vivid experience. Perhaps their principle intent is to establish a new and distinctive image for

themselves. They cultivate a neutral appearance, on the theory that a person should be known not by the symbols he elects to display but by his conduct."

"Bah," growled Glinnes. "A group of strident and callow malcontents! Where do they find the insolence to challenge so many persons older and wiser than themselves?"

"Alas!" sighed Akadie. "You'll find no novelty there."

Glinnes poured more wine into the mugs. "It all seems foolish, unnecessary, and futile. What do people want from life? We Trills have all the good things: food, music, merriment. Is this mischievous? What else is there to live for? The Fanschers are gargoyles screaming at the sun."

"On the face of it, the business is absurd," said Akadie. "Still—" he shrugged. "there is a certain grandeur in their point of view. Malcontents, but why? To wrench sense from archaic nonsense; to strike the sigil of human will upon elemental chaos; to affirm the shining brilliance of one soul alone among five trillion flaccid gray corpses. Yes, it is wild and brave."

"You sound like a Fanscher yourself," snorted Glinnes.

Akadie shook his head. "There are worse attitudes, but no, not I. Fanscherade is a young man's game. I'm far too old."

"What do they think of hussade?"

"They consider it spurious activity, to distract folk from the true color and texture of life."

Glinnes shook his head in wonder. "And to think the Trevanyi girl called me a Fanscher!"

"What a singular notion!" said

Akadie.

Glinnes turned Akadie a sharp glance but saw only an expression of limpid innocence. "How did Fanscherade start? I remember no such trend."

"The raw material has been long ready to hand, or so I would imagine. A certain spark of ideology was required, no more."

"And who then is the ideologue of Fanscherade?"

"Junius Farfan. He lives in Welgen."

"And Junius Farfan has my money!"

Akadie rose to his feet. "I hear a boat. It's Marucha at last." He went to the dock, followed by Glinnes. Along Ilfish Water came the boat behind its mustache of white water, across the edge of Ambal Broad and up to the dock. Glinnes took the line from Glay and made it fast to a bollard. Marucha stepped jauntily up to the dock; Glinnes looked in amazement at her clothes: a sheath of severe white linen, black ankle boots, a black cloche cap, which, in suppressing her hair, accentuated her resemblance to Glay.

Akadie came forward. "I'm sorry I missed you, still Glinnes and I have had a pleasant conversation. We've been discussing Fanscherade."

"How very nice!" said Marucha. "Have you brought him around?"

"I hardly think so," said Akadie with a grin. "The seed must lie before it germinates."

Glay, standing to the side, looked more sardonic than ever. Akadie continued. "I have certain articles for you. These—" he handed Marucha a small flask "—are sensitizers; they place your mind in its most receptive state, and conduce learning. Be sure to

take no more than a single capsule or you will become hyperaesthetic." He handed Marucha a parcel of books. "Here we have a manual of mathematical logic, a discussion of minichronics and a treatise on basic cosmology. All are important to your program."

"Very good," said Marucha somewhat stiffly. "I wonder what I would like to give you?"*

"Something on the order of fifteen ozols would be more than ample," said Akadie. "But no hurry of course. And now I too must be on my way. The dusk is far along."

Still Akadie lingered while Marucha counted out fifteen ozols and placed them in his limp-fingered hand. "Goodnight, my friend." She and Glay went to the house. Glinnes asked, "And what will I have the pleasure of forcing upon you for the consultation?"

"Ah indeed, let me consider. Twenty ozols would be more than generous, if my remarks have been of help."

Glinnes paid over the money, reflecting that Akadie set a rather high price on his expertise. Akadie departed up Farwan Water toward Saur River and thence by Tethryn Broad and Vernice Water to his eccentric old manse on Sarpassante Island.

Inside the house on Rabendary Island lights glowed. Glinnes slowly walked up to the verandah where Glay stood watching him.

"I've learned what you did with the money," said Glinnes. "You've given away Ambal Isle for sheer absurdity."

*The question: "How much do I owe you?" is considered crass on Trullion, where easy generosity is the way of life.

"We've discussed the situation as much as necessary. I'll be leaving your house in the morning. Marucha wants me to stay, but I think I'll be more comfortable elsewhere."

"Do your dirty little mess and run, eh?" The brothers glared at each other, then Glinnes swung off and into the house.

Marucha sat reading the manuals Akadie had brought. Glinnes opened his mouth, then shut it again and went out to sit brooding on the verandah. Inside the house Glay and Marucha spoke in low tones.

CHAPTER 6

IN THE MORNING Glay bundled up his belongings and Glinnes took him to Saurkash. Not a word was spoken during the trip. When he had stepped from the boat to Saurkash dock Glay said: "I won't be far away, not for awhile at any rate. Maybe I'll camp on the Commons. Akadie will know where to find me in case I'm needed. Try to be kind to Marucha. She's had an unhappy life, and now if she wants to play at girlhood where's the harm in it?"

"Bring back that twelve thousand ozols and I might pay you some heed," said Glinnes. "Right now all I expect of you is nonsense."

"The more fool you," said Glay, and went off up the dock. Glinnes watched him go. Then, instead of returning to Rabendary, he continued west toward Welgen.

Less than an hour's skim across the placid waterways brought him into Blacklyn Broad, with the great Karbach River entering from the north,

and the sea a mile or so to the south.

Glinnes tied the boat to the public dock, almost in the shadow of the hussade stadium; a structure of gray-green mena poles joined with black iron straps and brackets. He noticed a great cream-colored placard printed in red and blue:

THE FLEHARISH BROAD HUSSADE
CLUB

is now forming a team to compete at tournament level. Applicants of requisite skills will please apply to Jeral Estang, Secretary, or to the honorable sponsor, Thammas, Lord Gensifer.

Glinnes read the placard a second time, wondering where Lord Gensifer would assemble sufficient talent for a team of tournament quality. Ten years before a dozen teams had played around the Fens: the Welgen Storm-devils, the Invincibles of the Altramar Hussade Club, the Voulash Gialospans* of Great Vole Island, the Gaspar Magnetics, the Saurkash Serpents—this last the somewhat disorganized and casual group for whom Jut and Shira played—the Gorgets of the Loressamy Hussade Club, and various others, of various quality and ever-shifting personnel. Competition had run keen; skilled players were sought after, cozened, subjected to a hundred inducements. Glinnes had no reason to doubt but what a similar situation prevailed now.

Glinnes turned away from the stadium with a new thought itching at the

back of his mind. A poor hussade team lost money and unless subsidized, fell apart. A mediocre team might neither win nor lose, depending upon whether it scheduled games above itself or below. But a successful aggressive team often earned substantial booty in the course of a year, which when divided might well yield twelve thousand ozols per man. Glinnes walked thoughtfully to the central square. The structures seemed a trifle more weathered, and calepsis vines shading the arbor in front of the Aude de Lys Tavern were somewhat fuller and richer, and—now that Glinnes took the pains to notice—a surprising number of Fanscher uniforms and Fanscher—influenced garments were in evidence. Glinnes sneered in disgust for the faddishness of it all. At the center of the square, as before, stood the prutanshyr: a platform forty feet on a side, with a gantry above; and to the side, a subsidiary platform, or stand for the musicians who provided counterpoint to the rites of penitence.

Ten years had brought one or two new structures, most notably a new inn, The Noble Gambrinus, raised on mena timbers above the ground-level beer-garden, where four Trevanyi musicians played for such folk who had elected to take early refreshment.

Today was market day; costermongers had set up carts around the periphery of the square; they were uniformly of the Wrye race, a folk as separate and particular as the Trevanyi. Trills of Welgen and the countryside strolled at leisure past the barrows, examining and handling, haggling, occasionally buying. The country folk

*Gialospans: literally, girl denuders, in reference to the anticipated plight of the enemy sheirl.

were distinguishable by their garments: the inevitable paray, with whatever other vestments fancy, convenience, whim, or aesthetic impulse dictated: oddments of this, trifles of that; gay scarves, embroidered vests, shirts emblazoned with odd designs; beads, necklaces, jangling bracelets, headbands and cockades. Residents of the town wore clothes somewhat less idiosyncratic, and Glinnes noticed a good proportion of Fanscher suits, of good gray material, smartly tailored, worn with polished black ankle-boots. Some wore bucket-caps of black felt pulled tight over the hair. Some of those in such costume were older folk, self-conscious in their stylish finery. Certainly, reflected Glinnes, not all of these could be Fanschers . . . A thin long-armed man in dark gray approached Glinnes, who stared in shock and scornful amusement. "You too? Is it possible?"

Akadie showed no embarrassment. "Why not? Where is the harm in a fad? I enjoy pretending I'm young again."

"Must you pretend to Fanscherade at the same time?"

Akadie shrugged. "Again: why not? Perhaps they over-idealize themselves; perhaps they carp too earnestly at the superstition and sensuality of the rest of us. Still—" he made a deprecatory gesture "—I am as you see."

Glinnes shook his head in disapproval. "Suddenly these Fanschers control the wisdom of the world, and their parents, who gave them birth, are shiftless and squalid."

Akadie laughed. "Fads come, fads go; they relieve the tedium of routine; why not enjoy them?" Before Glinnes

could answer Akadie changed the subject. "I expected to find you here. You're naturally looking for Junius Farfan, and it just so happens that I can point him out to you. Look yonder, past that horrid instrument, to the parlour under the Noble Saint Gambrinus. In the deep shade to the left a Fanscher sits writing in a ledger. That man is Junius Farfan."

"I'll go talk to him now."

"Good luck," said Akadie.

Glinnes crossed the square, and stepping into the beer parlour approached the table Akadie had indicated. "You are Junius Farfan?"

The man looked up. Glinnes saw a face classically regular, if somewhat bloodless and cerebral. The gray suit hung with austere elegance on his spare frame, which seemed all nerve, bone and sinew. A black cloth casque confined his hair and dramatized a square pale forehead and brooding gray eyes. His age was probably less than that of Glinnes himself. "I am Junius Farfan."

"My name is Glinnes Hulden. Glay Hulden is my brother. Recently he turned over to you a large sum, on the order of twelve thousand ozols."

Farfan signified assent. "True."

"I bring bad news. Glay derived this money illegally. He sold property which belonged not to him but to me. To cut to the bone of the matter, I must have this money back."

Farfan seemed neither surprised nor overly concerned. He gestured to a chair. "Sit down. Will you take refreshment?"

Glinnes, seating himself, accepted a mug of ale. "Thank you; and where is

the money?"

Farfan gave him a dispassionate inspection. "Naturally you did not hope that I would hand over twelve thousand ozols in a bag."

"But I did hope so. I need the money to reclaim the property."

Farfan smiled in polite apology. "Your hopes cannot be realized, for I cannot return the money."

Glinnes put down the mug with a thump. "Why not?"

"The money has been invested; we have ordered the machinery to equip a factory. We intend to manufacture those goods which are now imported into Trullion."

Glinnes spoke in a voice hoarse with fury. "Then you had better get new money into your fund and pay me my twelve thousand ozols."

Farfan gave a grave assent. "If the money was indeed yours, I freely acknowledge the debt, and I will recommend that the money be repaid with interest from the first profits of our enterprises."

"And when will this be?"

"I don't know. We are hoping somehow to acquire a tract of land, by loan or donation or sequestration." Farfan grinned and his face became suddenly boyish. "Thereafter we must construct a plant, arrange for raw materials, learn appropriate techniques, produce and sell our goods, pay for the original stocks of raw materials, buy new stocks and supplies, and so forth."

Glinnes said, "This all becomes an appreciable period of time."

Junius Farfan frowned up into the air. "Let us fix upon the interval of five years. If you will then be good enough

to renew your claim, we can discuss the matter again, I hope to our mutual satisfaction. As an individual I sympathize with your plight," said Junius Farfan. "As secretary of an organization which desperately needs capital, I am only too happy to use your money; I conceive our need is more urgent than yours." He closed the register and rose to his feet. "Good-day, Squire Hulden."

CHAPTER 7

G LINNES WATCHED Junius Farfan cross the square, around and out of sight behind the prutanshyr. He had achieved only about as much as he had expected: nothing. Nevertheless his resentment now included the suave Junius Farfan as well as Glay. Still, it now became time to forget the lost money and try to find new. He looked into his wallet, though he already knew its contents: three thousand-ozol certificates, four hundred-ozol certificates, another hundred ozols in smaller paper. He therefore needed nine thousand ozols. His retirement pension amounted to a hundred ozols a month: more than ample for a man in his circumstances. He left the Noble Saint Gambrinus and crossed the square to the Welgen Bank, where he introduced himself to the chief officer.

"To be brief," said Glinnes, "my problem is this: I need nine thousand ozols to repossess Ambal Isle, which my brother incorrecly sold to a certain Lute Casagave."

"Yes, Lute Casagave; I recall the transaction."

"I wish to make a loan of nine thou-

sand ozols which I can repay at the rate of a hundred ozols per month. This is the fixed and definite sum I receive from the Whelm. Your money is perfectly safe and you are assured of repayment."

"Unless you die. Then what?"

Glinnes had not reckoned upon such a possibility. "There is always Rabendary Island, which I can propose for security."

"Rabendary Island. You are the owner?"

"I am the current squire," said Glinnes with a sudden sense of defeat. "My brother Shira disappeared two months ago. He is almost certainly dead."

"Very likely true. Still we cannot deal in 'almosts' and 'very likelys'. Shira Hulden cannot be presumed dead for four years. Until then you lack legal control of Rabendary Island. Unless, of course, you can prove his death."

Glinnes shook his head in vexation. "By diving down to consult the merlings? The situation is absurd."

"I appreciate the difficulties, of course, but we deal in many absurdities; this is no more than an ordinary example."

Glinnes threw up his hands in defeat. He left the bank and returned to his boat, pausing only to re-read the placard announcing the formation of the Fleharish Broad Hussade Club.

As the boat drove toward Rabendary, Glinnes performed a number of calculations, all to the same purport: nine thousand ozols was a great deal of money. He reckoned the utmost income he might derive from Rabendary Island: perhaps two thousand ozols a year, and insufficient by a

factor of five. Glinnes turned his mind to hussade. A member of an important team might well gain ten thousand or even twenty thousand ozols a year, if his team played often and consistently won. Lord Gensifer apparently planned the formation of such a team. Well and good, except that all the other teams of the region also strained and strove to the same end, scheming, intriguing, making large promises, propounding visions of wealth and glory: all in order to attract talented players, who were not plentiful. The aggressive man might be slow and clumsy; the quick man might have poor judgment or a bad memory or insufficient strength to tub his opponent. Each position made its specific demands. The ideal forward was fast, agile, daring, sufficiently strong to cope with the opponents' rovers and guards. A rover must also be quick and skillful; most urgently, he must be skillful with the buff: that padded implement used to thrust or trip the opponent from the ways or courses into the tanks. The rovers were the first line of defense against the thrusts of the forwards, and the guards were the last. The guards were massive powerful men, decisive with their buffs. Since they were not often required to trapeze, or leap the tanks, agility was not an essential attribute in a guard. The ideal hussade player comprised all these qualities; he was powerful, intelligent, cunning, nimble and merciless. Such men were rare. How then did Lord Gensifer propose to recruit a tournament-quality team? At Fleharish Broad Glinnes decided to find out and swung south toward the Five Islands.

Glinnes moored his boat beside Lord

Gensifer's sleek off-shore cruiser and leapt to the dock. A path led through a park to the manor. As he mounted the steps the door slid aside. A footman in lavender and gray livery appraised him without warmth. His perfunctory bow expressed his opinion of Glinnes' status. "What is your wish, sir?"

"Be so good as to tell Lord Gensifer that Glinnes Hulden wants a few words with him."

"Will you come inside, sir?"

Glinnes stepped into a tall hexagonal foyer, with a floor of gleaming gray and white stelt*. Overhead hung a chandelier of a hundred light-points and a thousand diamond prisms. In each wall a wainscot of white artica wood framed high narrow mirrors which cast back and forth the glitter of the chandelier.

The footman returned and conducted Glinnes to the library where Thammas Lord Gensifer, wearing a maroon lounge suit, sat at his ease before a screen watching a hussade game.*

*Stelt: a precious material quarried from volcanic necks upon certain types of dead stars: a composite of metal and natural glass, displaying infinite variations of pattern and color.

*The hussade field is a gridiron of 'runs' and 'laterals' above water four feet deep. The runs are nine feet apart, the laterals twelve feet. The tanks, therefore, except for the center moat and the end tanks, are nine feet wide and twelve feet long. Trapezes permit the players to swing from run to run, but not from lateral to lateral. The central moat is eight feet wide, and can be passed at either end, at the center or jumped if the player is sufficiently agile. The 'home' tanks at either end of the field flank the platform on which stands the sheirl.

Players buff or body-block opposing players into the tanks, but may not use the hands to push, pull, hold or tackle.

The captain of each team carries the 'hange'—a bulb on a three-foot pedestal. When the light glows the captain may not be attacked, nor may he attack. When he moves six feet from the hange, or when he lifts the hange to shift his position, the light goes dead; he may then attack and be attacked. An extremely strong captain may almost ignore his hange; a captain less able stations

"Sit down, Glinnes, sit down," said Lord Gensifer. "Will you take tea or perhaps a rum-punch?"

"I'll have rum-punch, please."

Lord Gensifer motioned to the screen. "Last year's finals at Cluster Stadium. The black and reds are the Hextar Zulans from Sigre. The greens are the Falifonics from Green Star. Marvelous play. I've watched the game four times now and each time I'm more amazed."

"I saw the Falifonics two or three years ago," said Glinnes. "I thought them agile and deft, and swift as lightning."

"They're still the same. Not large, but they seem to be everywhere at once. They have no great defence but they don't need any, with the attack they mount."

The footman served rum-punch in frosted silver goblets. For a period Lord Gensifer and Glinnes sat watching the play: charges and shifts, feints and ploys, apparently reckless feats of agility, timing so exact as to seem bizarre coincidence. Patterns formed to calls from the captain, aggressions were launched and repulsed. Gradually the combinations began to favor the Falifonics. The Falifonic middle forwards swung to fork a Zulan rover; guards charged to protect; the Falifonic right wing slid through the gap thus

himself on a key junction which he is then able to protect, by virtue of his impregnability within the area of the live hange.

The sheirl stands on her platform at the end of the field between the home tanks. She wears a white gown with a gold ring at the front. The enemy players seek to lay hold of this gold ring; a single pull denudes the sheirl. The dignity of the sheirl may be ransomed by her captain for five hundred ozols, a thousand, two thousand or higher, in accordance with a prearranged schedule.

opened, gained the platform and seized the gold ring at the sheirl's waist, and play came to a halt for the paying of ransom. Lord Gensifer turned off the screen. "The Falifonics won handily, as no doubt you know. Booty shared out at four thousand ozols a man . . . But you didn't come to talk hussade. Or did you?"

"As a matter of fact, yes. I happened to be in Welgen today and noticed mention of the new Fleharish Broad Club."

Lord Gensifer made an expansive gesture. "I'm the sponsor. It's something I've wanted to do a long time, and finally I took the plunge. Welgen Stadium is our home field, and now all I've got to do is assemble a team. What about you? Are you still playing?"

"I played for my division," said Glinnes. "We took the sector championships."

"That sounds interesting. Why don't you try out with us?"

"I might just do so, but first I've got a problem you might help me work out."

Lord Gensifer blinked cautiously. "I'll be glad to, if I can. What's the problem?"

"As you probably know, my brother Glav sold Ambal Isle out from under me. He won't return the money; in fact, it's gone."

Lord Gensifer raised his eyebrows. "Fanscherade?"

"Exactly."

Lord Gensifer shook his head. "Silly young fool."

"My problem is this. I have three thousand ozols of my own. I need another nine thousand to pay off Lute

Casagave and break the contract."

Lord Gensifer pursed his lips and fluttered his fingers. "If Glav had no right to sell, then Casagave had no right to buy. The matter would seem to be between Glav and Casagave, with you in legal possession."

"Unfortunately I have no legal possession unless I can prove Shira dead, which I can't. I need cold hard cash."

"It's a dilemma," Lord Gensifer agreed.

"Here is my proposal: suppose I were to play with you—could you advance me nine thousand ozols against booty?"

Lord Gensifer sat back in his chair. "That's a very chancy investment."

"Not if you can put together a good team. Though frankly I don't see where you'll get the personnel."

"They're on hand." Lord Gensifer sat up in his seat, his pink face alive with boyish excitement. "I've drawn up what I consider the strongest team which could be assembled from players of the region. Listen to this." He read from a paper. "Wings: Tyrön Lucho, Lightning Latken. Strikes: Yalden Wirp, Gold Ring Gonnixsen. Rovers: Nilo Basgard, Wildman Wilmer Guff. Guards: Splasher Maveldip, Bughead Holub, Carbo Gilweg, Holbert Hani-gatz." Lord Gensifer put down the paper and peered triumphantly at Glinnes. "What do you think of that team?"

"I've been away too long," said Glinnes. "I only know about half the names. I've played with Gonnixsen and Carbo Gilweg, and against Guff and maybe one or two others. They were good ten years ago and they're probably better now. Are all these men

on your team?"

"Well—not officially. My strategy is this. I'll talk to each man in turn. I'll show him the team and ask how he'd like to be a part of it. How can I loose? Everyone wants to earn some big booty for a change. No one is going to turn me down. As a matter of fact, I've already made contact with two or three of the fellows and they've all shown great interest."

"Where would I fit in? And what about the nine thousand ozols?"

Lord Gensifer said cautiously, "As to your first question, you must remember that I haven't seen you play recently. For all I know you've gone slow and sour . . . Where are you going?"

"Thank you for the rum punch," said Glinnes.

"Just a minute. No need to get temperamental. After all, I spoke only the plain truth. I haven't seen you for ten years. Still, if you played with the sector champions, no doubt you're in good shape. What is your position?"

"Anything but sheirl. With the 93rd I played strike and rover."

Lord Gensifer poured Glinnes more punch. "No doubt something can be arranged. But you must understand my position. I'm going after the best. If you're the best you'll play for the Gorgons. If you're not . . . Well, we'll need substitutes. That's sheer common sense, nothing to get excited about."

"Well then, what about the nine thousand ozols?"

Lord Gensifer sipped his punch. "I should think that if all goes well, and if you—well, let's say, if you are playing for the club, that you should take nine thousand ozols in booty in a very short

time."

"In other words—you won't advance me the money?"

Lord Gensifer held up his hands. "Do you imagine that ozols grow on trees? I need money as badly as anyone. In fact—well, I won't go into details."

"If you're all that short of money, how can you finance a treasure-box?"

Lord Gensifer airily flicked his fingers. "No difficulty there. Whatever funds are jointly available we'll use: your three thousand ozols as well. It's all for the common cause."

Glinnes could hardly believe his ears. "My three thousand ozols? You want me to advance the fund? While you take an owner's share of booty?"

Lord Gensifer, smiling, leaned back in his chair. "Why not? Each contributes his best and his most, and each of us profits. That's the only way to operate. There's no reason to be scandalized."

Glinnes replaced his goblet on the tray. "It's just not done. The players contribute their skills, the club funds the treasure-box. I wouldn't give you an ozol; I'd organize my own team first."

"Just a moment. Perhaps we can work out a procedure that will please us all. Frankly, I'm short of cash. You need twelve thousand ozols within the year; your three thousand is worthless without the other nine."

"Not exactly worthless. It represents ten years service in the Whelm."

Lord Gensifer waved aside the remark. "Suppose that you advance three thousand ozols to the fund. The first three thousand ozols we earn will go to you; you'll have your money back, and then—"

"The other players wouldn't allow such an arrangement."

Lord Gensifer pulled at his lower lip. "Well, the money could come from the club's share of the booty—in other words, out of my personal purse."

"Suppose there isn't any purse; suppose we lose my three thousand ozols? Then what? Nothing!"

"We don't plan to lose! Think positive, Glinnes!"

"I'm thinking positively about my money."

Lord Gensifer heaved a deep sigh. "As I say, my own financial status is at the moment up in the air . . . Suppose that we make this arrangement. You advance three thousand ozols to the club treasury. We will at first try for five-thousand-ozol teams, which we should handily demolish, and build up the treasury to ten thousand ozols. We then schedule ten-thousand-ozol teams. At this point booty will be distributed and you will be repaid from the club's share: the work of a game or two. Thenceforth I will lend you half the club's share until you have your nine thousand ozols, which you can thereupon repay from your ordinary share."

Glinnes tried to calculate in his head. "I don't understand any of this. You've left me far behind."

"It's simple. If we win five ten-thousand-ozol games, you have your money."

"If we win. If we lose, I have nothing. Not even the three thousand which I have now."

Lord Gensifer flourished his list of names. "This team won't lose games, I assure you of that!"

"You don't have that team! You don't have a fund. You don't even have a sheirl."

"No lack of applicants there, my boy. Not for the Fleharish Gorgons! I've already talked to a dozen beautiful creatures."

"All certified, no doubt."

"We'll certify them, no fear! But what a ridiculous business! A naked virgin looks like any other naked girl. Who's to know the difference?"

"The team. Irrational, I agree, but hussade is an irrational game."

"I'll drink to that," declared Lord Gensifer rather boisterously. "Who cares a fig for rationality? Only Fanschers and Trevanyi!"

Glinnes drained his goblet and rose to his feet. "I must be on my way home, and see to my personal Trevanyi. Glav gave them the freedom of Rabendary and they plundered in all directions."

Lord Gensifer nodded sagely. "You can't give a Trevanyi anything but what he'll take double for contempt . . . Well, to revert to the three thousand ozols, what is your decision?"

"I'll want to consider the matter very carefully indeed. As for that list of players: how many have actually committed themselves?"

"Well—several."

"I'll talk to them all and learn if they're really serious."

Lord Gensifer frowned. "Hmm. Let's think this over a bit. In fact, will you stay for a bite of dinner? I'm quite alone tonight, and I detest dining in solitude."

"That's very kind of you, Lord Gensifer, but I'm hardly dressed for dinner at a manor."

Lord Gensifer made a deprecatory motion. "Tonight we'll dine informally—although I could lend you formal kit, if you insisted."

"Well, no. I'm not that meticulous, if you're not."

"Tonight we'll dine as we are. Perhaps you'd like to watch more of the championship game."

"As a matter of fact I would."

"Good. Rallo! Fresh punch! This has lost its zest."

THE GREAT OVAL dinner table was set for two; Lord Gensifer and Glinnes faced each other across an expanse of white linen. Silver and crystal glittered under the blaze of a chandelier.

"It may seem strange to you," said Lord Gensifer, "that I can live in what might seem extravagant style, and still be strapped for cash. But it's simple enough. My income derives from invested capital, and I've had reverses. Starmenters looted a pair of warehouses and set my company back on its heels. Strictly temporary, of course, but for the moment my income just barely matches my outgo. Do you know of Bela Gazzardo?"

"I've heard the name. A starmenter?"

"The villain who cut my income in half. The Whelm can't seem to come to grips with him."

"Sooner or later he'll be taken. Only inconspicuous starmenters survive. When they attain reputation their number is up."

"Bela Gazzardo's been starmenting for many years," said Lord Gensifer. "The Whelm is always in a different sector."

"Sooner or later he'll be taken."

Dinner proceeded: a repast of a dozen excellent course, each accompanied by flasks of fine wine. Glinnes reflected that life in a manor was not without its pleasant aspects, and his fancy roamed the future, when he had earned twenty or thirty thousand ozols, or a hundred thousand; when Lute Casagave had been expelled from Ambal Isle and the manse was empty. Then, what an adventure to renew, redecorate, refurnish! Glinnes saw himself in stately garments entertaining a throng of notables, at a table like Lord Gensifer's. . . . Glinnes laughed at the thought. Who could he invite to his dinner parties? Akadie? Young Har-rad? Carbo Gilweg? The Drossets? Though for a fact Duissane would look extraordinarily lovely in such surroundings. Glinnes' imagination included the rest of the family and the picture burst.

Dusk had long waned when Glinnes finally climbed into his boat. The night was clear; overhead hung a myriad stars, magnified to the size of lamps. Elevated by the wine, by the large prospects which Lord Gensifer had suggested, by the halcyon beauty of starlight on calm black water, Glinnes sent his boat scudding across Fleharish Broad and up Selma Water. Under the glorious Trullion night his problems dissolved into wisps of unreasonable petulance. Glay and Fanscherade? A fad, an antic, a trifle. Marucha and her foolishness? Let her be, let her be; what better occupation lay open to her? Lord Gensifer and his crafty proposals? They might just eventuate as Lord Gensifer hoped! But the absurdity of it all!

Instead of borrowing nine thousand ozols, he had barely escaped with his own three thousand intact! Lord Gensifer's schemes no doubt derived from a desperate need of money, thought Glinnes. No matter how affable and how ostensibly candid, Lord Gensifer was still a man to be dealt with most carefully.

Up narrow Selma Water drifted the boat, past hushberry brakes and bowers of soft white lanting, then out upon Ambal Broad, where a small breeze shivered the star-reflections into a tinkling twinkling carpet. To the right stood Ambal Isle, surmounted by antic fanzaneel frond-clusters; they lay on the sky like splashes of black ink. And there ahead: Rabendary Island, dear Rabendary, and his home dock. The house showed no light; was no one at home? Where was Marucha? Visiting friends, most likely.

The boat coasted up to the dock. Glinnes climbed up on the groaning old boards, made fast the boat, walked up the path to the house.

A creak of leather, a shuffle of steps. Shadows moved; dark shapes occulted the stars. Heavy objects struck down upon his head and neck and shoulders: thudding and jarring, grinding his teeth, grating his vertebrae, filling his nose with an ammoniacal reek. He fell to the ground. Heavy blows struck into his ribs, his head; the impacts rumbled and groaned like thunder and filled the total space of the world. He tried to roll away, to curl into a knot, but his senses wandered away.

The kicking ceased; Glinnes floated on a cloud of enervation. From far far away he noticed hands exploring his

person; a harsh whisper rang in his brain: "Get the knife, get the knife." Further touches, then another flurry of kicks. From a great distance Glinnes thought to hear a trill of reckless laughter. Consciousness fragmented like droplets of mercury; Glinnes lay in a torpor.

TIME PASSED; the carpet of stars slid across the sky. Slowly, slowly, from many directions, the components of consciousness began to wander back together.

Something strong and cold seized Glinnes' ankle, drew him down the path toward the water. Glinnes groaned and spread out his fingers to clutch the sod, without effect. He kicked with all his strength and struck into something pulpy. The grip on his ankle loosened. Glinnes painfully hunched up on hands and knees and crawled back up the path. The merling came after him and resumed its grip. Glinnes again kicked out and the merling croaked in annoyance.

Glinnes rolled weakly over; under the Trullion star-blaze man and merling confronted each other. Glinnes began to slide back on his haunches, a foot at a time. The merling hopped forward. Glinnes' back struck the steps leading up to the verandah. Underneath were fence-staves cut from pricklebush. Glinnes turned and groped; his fingers touched one of the staves. The merling snatched and once more dragged him toward the water. Glinnes thrashed like a grounded fish, and breaking free struggled back to the verandah. The merling uttered a dismal croak and jumped forward; Glinnes grasped a

stave and thrust it at the creature's groin; it sagged away. Glinnes hunched himself up on the stairs, stave ready; the merling dared approach no further. Glinnes crawled into the house, forced himself to stand erect. He tottered to the light-switch, and brought glow into the house. He stood swaying. His head throbbed, his eyes refused to focus. Breathing tore at his ribs; conceivably several were broken. His thighs ached where his attackers had sought to make pulp of his crotch, failing only for the poor illumination. A new and sharper pang struck him; he felt for his wallet. Nothing. He looked down at his boot scabbard; his marvelous proteum knife was gone.

Glinnes sighed in fury. Who had done this? He suspected the Drossets. Recalling the tinkle of merry laughter, he was certain.

IN THE MORNING Marucha had not yet arrived home; Glinnes presumed that she had spent the night with a lover. Glinnes was as happy that she was not on hand; she would have analyzed every aspect of his folly, for which he was not in the mood.

Glinnes lay on the couch, aching in every bone, sweating with hatred for the Drossets. He staggered into the bathroom, examined his purple face. In the cabinet he found a pain-relieving potion, with which he dosed himself, then limped back to the couch.

He dozed off and on throughout the morning. At noon the telephone chime sounded. Glinnes stumbled across the room and spoke into the mesh, without showing his face to the screen. "Who's

calling?"

"This is Marucha," came his mother's clear voice. "Glinnes—are you there?"

"Yes, I'm here."

"Well, then, show yourself; I detest speaking to persons I can't see."

Glinnes fumbled around with the vision-push. "The button seems to be stuck. Can you see me?"

"No, I cannot. Well, it doesn't matter. Glinnes, I've come to a decision. Akadie has long wanted me to share his home, and now that you are back and presently will be bringing a woman into the house, I have agreed to the arrangement."

Glinnes only half-restrained a mournful chuckle. How his father Jut would have roared in wrath! "My best wishes for your happiness, mother, and please convey my respects to Akadie."

Marucha peered into the screen. "Glinnes, your voice sounds strange. Are you well?"

"Yes, indeed; just a bit hoarse. After you've settled yourself I'll come over for a visit."

"Very well, Glinnes. Do take care of yourself, and please don't be too stern with the Drossets. If they want to stay on Rabendary, where is the harm in it?"

"I'll certainly consider your advice, mother."

"Goodby Glinnes." The screen faded.

Glinnes heaved a deep sigh, and winced for the zig-zags of pain across his ribs. Were any broken? He explored with his fingers, prodding the most tender areas, and could come to no decision.

He took a bowl of porridge out on the verandah and ate a dreary meal. The Drossets of course had departed, leaving a litter of rubbish, a pile of dead foliage, a dispirited outhouse of branches and fronds, to mark the site of their camp. Three thousand four hundred ozols they had earned by their night's work, as well as the pleasure of punishing their persecutor. The Drossets were well-pleased today.

Glinnes went to the telephone and called Egon Rimbold, the medical practitioner in Saurkash. He explained something of his difficulties and Rimbold agreed to pay him a visit.

Limping out to the verandah, Glinnes lowered himself into one of the old string chairs. The view as always was placid. Pearl-colored haze obscured the distance; Ambal seemed a floating fairy-island. Marucha, ostensibly disdainful of aristocratic ritual, had become a hussade princess, risking the poignant humiliation—or was it glory?—of public exposure in the hope that she might make an aristocratic marriage. She had settled for the Squire of Rabendary, Jut Hulden. Perhaps at the back of her mind had lurked the image of Ambal Manor, where nothing could have persuaded Jut to live. . . . Jut was dead; Ambal had been sold and Marucha now found nothing on Rabendary to keep her. To regain Ambal Isle he could repay twelve thousand ozols to Casagave and tear up the contract. Or he could prove Shira's death, whereupon the transaction became illegal. Twelve thousand ozols were hard to come by, and a man taken down to the merling's dinner table left few traces. Glinnes

hunched around to look along the path. There: where the Drossets had waited behind the pricklesberry hedge. There: where they had beat him. There: the marks he had scratched into the sod. Not far beyond lay the placid surface of Farwan Water.

Egon Rimbold arrived in his narrow black runabout. "Instead of returning from the wars," said Rimbold, "it appears that you've been through them."

Glinnes told him something of what had occurred. Rimbold looked across the meadow. "I notice that the Drossets are gone."

"Gone but not forgotten."

"Well, let's see what we can do for you."

Rimbold worked to good effect, using the advanced pharmacopeia of Alastor and pads of adhesive constrict; Glinnes began to feel a relatively sound man.

Packing his instruments, Rimbold asked: "I suppose you reported the attack to the constabulary?"

Glinnes blinked. "To tell the truth, the idea never occurred to me."

"It might be wise. The Drossets are a rough lot. The girl is as bad as the rest."

"I'll see to her as well as the others," said Glinnes. "I don't know how or when, but none will escape."

Rimbold made a gesture counselling moderation, or at least caution, and took his leave.

Glinnes reexamined himself in the mirror and took a glum satisfaction in his improved appearance. Returning to the verandah, and lowering himself gingerly into a chair, he considered how

best to revenge himself on the Drossets. Threats and menaces might provide a temporary satisfaction, but when all was considered served no useful purpose.

Glinnes became restless. He limped here and there around the property, and was dismayed by the neglect and dilapidation. Rabendary was disreputable even by Trill standards; Glinnes once again became angry at Glay and Marucha. Did they feel no friendliness whatever for the old home? No matter; he would set things straight, and Rabendary would be as he remembered it from his childhood.

Today he was too lame to work and with nothing better to do he gingerly stepped into his boat and drove up Farwan Water to the Saur River, then over the top of Rabendary to Gilweg Island and the rambling old home of his friends the Gilwegs, and the rest of the day was given to that typical Trill festivity which the Fanschers considered shiftless, untidy and dissolute. Glinnes became somewhat intoxicated; he sang old songs to the music of concertinas and guitars; he romped with the Gilweg girls and made himself so agreeable that the Gilwegs volunteered to come to Rabendary on the next day to clean up the Drosset camp.

The subject of hussade was broached. Glinnes mentioned Lord Gensifer and the Fleharish Gorgons. "So far the team is no more than a list of important names. Still, what if all became Gorgons? Stranger things have happened. He wants me at strike and I'm inclined to give it a try, if only for the sake of money."

"Bah," said Carbo Gilweg. "Lord Gensifer doesn't know wet from dry, so far as hussade is concerned. And where will he find the ozols? Everyone knows that he lives from hand to mouth."

"Not so!" declared Glinnes. "I took a meal with him; and I can vouch that he stints himself very little."

"That may be, but operating an important team is another matter. He'll need uniforms, helmets, a respectable treasury; it amounts to five thousand ozols or more. I doubt if he can give substance to the idea. Who is to be his captain?"

Glinnes reflected. "I don't believe he specified a captain."

"There's the sticking point. If he recruits a reputable captain, he'll attract players more skeptical than yourself."

"Don't think me so innocent! I gave him nothing but an expression of interest."

"You'd be better off with our good old Saukash Tanchinaros," declared Ao Gilweg.

"For a fact, we could use a pair of good forwards," said Carbo. "Our back line, if I say so myself, is as good as any, but we can't get our own men past the moat. Join the Tanchinaros! We'll sweep Facho Prefecture clean."

"How much is your treasure?"

"We can't seem to push past a thousand ozols," Carbo admitted. "We win one, then lose one. Frankly, we've got uneven quality. Old Neronavy isn't the most inspiring captain; he never stirs from his hange, and he only knows three plays. I could go down the lineup, but it wouldn't mean much."

"You've just persuaded me to the

Gorgons," said Glinnes. "I remember Neronavy from ten years ago. I'd rather have Akadie for captain."

"Apathy, torpor," said Ao Gilweg. "The group needs stirring up."

"We haven't had a pretty sheirl for two years," said Carbo. "Jenlis Wade: bland as a dead cavout. She just looked puzzled when she lost her gown. Barsilla Cloforeth—too tall and hungry. When they stripped her no one even bothered to look. Barsilla marched off in disgust."

"We have pretty sheirls here—" Ao Gilweg jerked his thumb at his daughters Rolanda and Berinda—"except that they prefer to play something other than hussade with the boys. Now they can't quite qualify."

Afternoon became avness, avness became dusk, dusk became dark, and Glinnes was persuaded to spend the night.

In the morning Glinnes returned to Rabendary and began to clear the site of the Drosset Camp. A peculiar circumstance gave him pause. A hole had been dug two feet into the ground, on the site of the fire. The hole was empty. Glinnes could form no sensible conjecture to account for such a hole, at the precise center of the old fire-site.

At noon the Gilwegs arrived and two hours later every evidence of the Drosset presence was expunged.

The Gilweg women meanwhile prepared the best meal possible, while disparaging Marucha's larder, which they considered austere; they had never cared much for Marucha to begin with; she gave herself too many airs.

The Gilwegs now knew every detail of Glinnes' troubles. They offered an

amplitude of sympathy and as much conflicting advice. Ao Gilweg, the head of the family, had spoken to Lute Casagave on several occasions. "A canny character, seething with schemes! He's not out there on Ambal Isle for his health!"

"It's the usual way with off-world folk," his wife Clara declared. "I've seen many: all overwrought and anxious, fussy and fastidious. Not one knows how to live a normal life."

"Casagave is either bashful or blind," said Carbo. "If you pass his boat he never so much as lifts his head."

"He fancies himself a great noble," said Clara with a sniff. "He's far too good for us ordinary folk. We've never tasted a drop of his wine, that's for sure."

Clara's sister, Currance, asked, "Have you seen his servant? There's a sight for you! I believe he's half Polgonian ape, or some such mixture. That one will never set foot in my house, so much I swear."

"True," declared Clara. "He has the look of a villain. And never forget: birds of a feather flock together! Lute Casagave is undoubtedly as bad as his servant!"

Ao Gilweg held up his hands in demonstration. "Now, now! A moment for sensible thought! Nothing has been proved against either of these men; in fact, they're not even accused!"

"He sequestered Ambal Isle! Isn't that enough?"

"Perhaps he was misled, who knows? He might well be a just and innocent man."

"A just and innocent man would re-

linquish his illegal occupancy!"

"Exactly! Perhaps Lute Casagave is that man!" Ao turned to Glinnes. "Have you discussed the matter with Lute Casagave himself? I thought not."

Glinnes looked skeptically toward Ambal Isle. "I suppose I could speak to him. One stark fact remains. Even a just man would want his twelve thousand ozols, which I am not prepared to supply."

"Refer him to Glay, to whom he paid the money," Carbo advised. "He should have assured a clear title before he closed the bargain."

"It's a strange circumstance, strange indeed. . . . Unless he knew, for a fact, that Shira were indeed dead, which leads into a set of macabre speculations."

"Bah!" declared Ao Gilweg. "Take the bull by the horns; go speak to the man; tell him to vacate your property and go for his money to Glay, the man to whom he paid it."

"By the Fifteen Devils you're right!" exclaimed Glinnes. "It is absolutely clear and obvious; he hasn't a leg to stand on! I'll make this clear to him tomorrow."

"Remember Shira!" spoke Carbo Gilweg. "He may be a man without restraint!"

"Best to carry a weapon," Ao Gilweg advised. "Nothing to induce humility as well as an eight-bore blaster."

"At the moment, I have no weapon," said Glinnes. "Those Trevanyi villains gleaned my belongings like a rumble-snout sucking bugs from a box. "Still I doubt if I'll need weapons; if Casagave, as I hope, is a reasonable man, we'll quickly reach an understanding."

BETWEEN RABENDARY DOCK and Ambal Isle lay only a few hundred yards of still water, a trip which Glinnes had made uncounted times. Never had it seemed so long.

Ambal Isle showed no activity; only Casagave's gray runabout indicated his presence. Glinnes moored his boat, jumped up on the dock as jauntily as his still aching ribs permitted. As etiquette demanded, he touched the bell-button before starting up the walk.

Ambal Manor was much like Gensifer Manor: a tall white structure of extravagant complexity. Bays projected from every wall; on fluted pilasters rested the roof: four milk-glass domes and a central golden spire. No smoke issued from the chimney; no sound could be heard from within. Glinnes touched the doorbell.

A minute passed. There was movement behind a bay-window; then the door opened and Lute Casagave looked forth: a man considerably older than Glinnes, thin-legged, stoop-shouldered, in a loose off-worlder's suit of gray gabardine. Silver hair hung beside a sallow face, which included a long bony nose, long gaunt cheeks, eyes like chips of cold stone. Casagave's face expressed a stern and alert intelligence, but it did not seem the face of a man who might contribute twelve thousand ozols to the cause of abstract justice.

Casagave spoke neither greeting nor question, but stared silently forth, waiting for Glinnes to define the reason for his presence.

Glinnes said politely: "I'm afraid I have some bad news for you, Lute Casagave."

"You may address me as Lord

Ambal."

Glinnes' mouth went slack. "'Lord Ambal?'"

"This is how I choose to be known."

Glinnes shook his head dubiously. "That's all well and good. Your blood may be the noblest of Trullion; still you can't be Lord Ambal, because Ambal Isle is not your property. That's the bad news to which I referred."

"Who are you?"

"I am Glinnes Hulden, Squire of Rabendary, and I own Ambal Isle. You gave my brother Glay money for property he neglected to own. It's an unpleasant situation. I certainly don't intend to charge you rent for your time here, but I'm afraid you'll have to find another residence."

Casagave's eyebrows contracted; his eyes became slits. "You talk nonsense. I am Lord Ambal, the sanguineal descendant to that Lord Ambal who illegally sought to dispose of the ancestral property. The original transaction was invalid; the Hulden title was never good to begin with. Be grateful for your twelve thousand ozols; I was not obliged to pay anything."

"Now then!" cried Glinnes. "The sale was made to my great-grandfather. It was recorded with the registrar at Welgen, and cannot be invalidated!"

"I'm not so sure of that," said Lute Casagave. "You are Glinnes Hulden? This means nothing to me. Shira Hulden is the man from whom I bought the property, with your brother Glay acting as his agent."

"Shira is dead," said Glinnes. "The sale was fraudulent. I suggest that you make representations to Glay for your money."

"Shira is dead? How do you know?"

"He is dead, probably murdered and dragged off by the merlings."

"'Probably'? Probability has no legal standing. My contract is sound unless you can prove otherwise, or unless you die, when the question becomes moot."

"I don't plan to die," said Glinnes.

"Who does? The event comes on us all willy-nilly."

"Do you threaten me now?"

Casagave merely gave a dry chuckle. "You are trespassing on Ambal Isle; you have ten seconds to remove yourself."

Glinnes' voice shook with rage. "The shoe is on the other foot. I provide you three days, and three days only, to get off my property."

"And then?" Lute Casagave's voice was sardonic.

"Never mind what then. Get off Ambal Isle or you'll learn."

Casagave gave a shrill whistle. Footsteps thudded; behind Glinnes appeared a man seven feet tall, weighing perhaps three hundred pounds. His skin was the color of teak; black hair clung to his head like fur. Casagave jerked his thumb toward the dock. "Either in your boat or into the water."

Glinnes, still sore from a previous beating, did not care to risk another. He turned on his heel and stalked down the path. Lord Ambal? What a travesty! So here had been the motivation for Casagave's researches!

The boat took Glinnes out upon the water. He slowly circled Ambal Isle; never had it seemed so lovely. What if Casagave ignored the three-day deadline—as he was sure to do? Glinnes

gave his head a dreary shake. Force would bring him afoul of the constabulary—unless he could prove Shira's death.

CHAPTER 9

AKADIE LIVED in a quaint old manse on a point of land known as Rorquin's Tooth overlooking Clinkhammer Broad, five miles northwest of Rabendary. Rorquin's Tooth was a jut of weathered black stone, perhaps the stump of an ancient volcano, now overgrown with jard, fire-blossom and dwarf pomanders; at the back rose a copse of sentinellos. Akadie's manse, the follow of a long-forgotten lord, raised five towers to the sky, each of different height and architectural order. One was roofed with slate, another with tile, a third with green glass, the fourth with lead, the fifth with the artificial material spandex. Each supported at its summit a study with special appurtenances and outlook, to suit one or another of Akadie's moods. Akadie recognized and enjoyed each of his own quirks and made a virtue of inconsistency.

In the early morning, while the haze still swirled in wisps, Glinnes drove his boat north up Farwan Water and the Saur, along narrow weed-choked Vernice Way, into Clinkhammer Broad. Reflected double upon the smooth water stood Akadie's five-towered manse.

Akadie had only just arisen from his bed; his hair was rumped into wisps; his eyes were only half-open; nevertheless he gave Glinnes an affable good-morning. "Please do not expound

your business before breakfast; the world is not yet in focus."

"I came to see Marucha," said Glinnes. "I am not in need of your services."

"In that case, talk as you will."

Marucha, always an early-riser, seemed taut and peevish, and greeted Glinnes without effusiveness. She served Akadie a breakfast of fruit, tea and buns, and poured Glinnes tea.

"Ah!" said Akadie, "the day begins, and once again I will concede that a world exists beyond the confines of this room." He sipped his tea. "And how go your affairs?"

"As well as could be expected. My troubles have not disappeared at a snap of the fingers."

"Sometimes," Akadie observed, "a person's troubles are only those which he creates for himself."

"This is absolutely true in my case," said Glinnes. "I strive to recover my property, and protect what is left and in so doing, I stimulate my enemies."

Marucha, working in the kitchen, showed elaborate disdain for the conversation.

Glinnes went on. "The basic culprit is of course Glay. He worked a world of mischief, then walked away from the mess. I consider him a poor excuse for a Hulden, and for a brother."

Marucha could no longer contain her tongue. "I doubt if he cares whether he's a Hulden or not. As far as brotherhood, the relationship extends in both directions. You are not helping him in his work, let me remind you."

"It costs too much," said Glinnes. "Glay can afford gifts of twelve thousand ozols because the money never

belonged to him. I saved only thirty-four hundred ozols, which Glay's cronies the Drossets took from me. I now have nothing."

"You have Rabendary Island. That is a great deal."

"At last you acknowledge Shira's death."

Akadie held up his hand. "Now then! Let us take our tea up to the South Vantage. Come along up the stairs, but take care; the treads are narrow."

They mounted into the lowest and most spacious tower, which afforded a view over all of Clinkhammer Broad. Akadie had hung antique gonfalons about the dark paneling; a collection of eccentric red stoneware pots stood in a corner. Akadie put teapot and cups on the withe table and motioned Glinnes to pull up one of the fan-backed old withe chairs. "When I enticed Marucha into the house I did not expect a complement of family dissensions as well."

"Perhaps this morning I am a trifle out of sorts," Glinnes admitted. "The Drossets waylaid me in the dark, thrashed me soundly and took all my money. For this reason I can't sleep of nights; my insides seethe and boil and twist with rage."

"An exasperation, to say the least. Are you planning counter-measures?"

Glinnes gave him an incredulous glare. "I plan nothing else! But nothing seems sensible. I could kill one or two Drossets, end up on the prutanshyr and still lack my money. I could drug their wine and search their camp while they slept, but I have no such drug and even if I had, how could I be sure that all had drunk the wine?"

"These feats are easier planned than

accomplished," said Akadie. "But allow me a suggestion. Do you know the Glade of Xian?"

"I have never visited the place," said Glinnes. "It is the Trevanyi burial ground, so I understand."

"It is much more than that. The Bird of Death flies from the Vale of Xian, and the dying man hears its song. Trevanyi ghosts walk in the shade of the great ombrils, which grow nowhere else in Merland. Now, and here is the point! If you located the Drosset crypt and secured one of the death-urns, Vang Drosset would sacrifice his daughter's chastity to get it back."

"I am uninterested—or let us say, barely interested—in his daughter's chastity. I merely require my money. Your idea has merit."

Akadie made a deprecatory gesture. "You are very kind. But the proposal is as inept and hallucinatory as any of the others. The difficulties are insuperable. For instance, how could you learn the location of the crypt except from Vang Drosset? If he loved you well enough to confide this basic secret of his existence, why would he deny you your ozols and the accomodation of his daughter as well? Assume you so bewildered and beguiled Vang Drosset that he told his secret and you went to the Vale of Xian, how would you evade the Three Croncs, not to mention the ghosts?"

"I don't know," said Glinnes.

The two men sat in silence sipping tea. After a moment Akadie asked, "Have you made the acquaintance of Lute Casagave?"

"Yes. He refuses to leave Ambal Isle."

"Predictably. He would at least want his twelve thousand ozols back."

"He claims to be Lord Ambal."

Akadie sat up in his chair, eyes dancing with speculation. Here, for Akadie, was a truly fascinating concept. Somewhat regretfully, he shook his head and settled back into the chair. "Unlikely. Very unlikely. And irrelevant in any case. I fear that you must resign yourself to the loss of Ambal Isle."

"I can't resign myself to losing anything!" cried Glinnes in a passion. "A hussade game, Ambal Isle, it's all the same. I'll never give up; I must have what is due me!"

Akadie held up his hand. "Calm yourself. 'I will consider at leisure and who knows what will occur? The fee is fifteen ozols.'"

"'Fifteen ozols!'" demanded Glinnes. "For what? All you did was tell me to be calm."

Akadie made a suave gesture. "I gave you that negative advice which often is as valuable as a positive program. For instance, suppose you asked me: 'How can I leap from here to Welgen in a single bound?' I could utter one word 'Impossible!' to save you a great deal of useless exercise, and thus justify a fee of twenty or thirty ozols."

Glinnes smiled grimly. "In the matter at hand, you save me no useless exercise; you have told me nothing I don't know already. You must consider this a social call."

Akadie shrugged. "It is of no consequence."

The two men returned to the lower floor, where Marucha sat reading a journal published in Port Maheul:

Interesting Activities of the Elite.

"Goodby, mother," said Glinnes. "Thank you for the tea."

Marucha looked up from the journal. "You're more than welcome, of course." She began to read once more.

As Glinnes drove back across Clinkhammer Broad, he wondered why Marucha disliked him, though in his heart he knew the answer well enough. Marucha disliked not Glinnes; she disliked Jut and his 'gross behaviour': his carousing, bellowed songs, rude amorousness, and general lack of elegance. In short, she considered her husband a boor. Glinnes, though far more gracious and easy than his father, reminded her of Jut. There could never be real warmth between them. Good enough, thought Glinnes; he wasn't especially fond of Marucha either. . . Glinnes turned the boat into Zeur Water, which bounded the Prefecture Commons on the north, and then on impulse he slowed and turned into the shore. Nosing his boat through the reeds, he made the boat fast to the crook of a casammon tree and clambered up the bank to where he could look across the island.

Three hundred yards away, beside a copse of black candlenuts, the Drossets had pitched their three tents: the same rectangles of orange, dirty maroon and black which had offended Glinnes' eyes on Rabendary. On a bench Vang Drosset sat hunched over a fruit of some kind: a melon, or perhaps a *cazaldo*. Tingo, wearing a lavender headkerchief, squatted beside the fire, shopping up tubers and throwing them into the cauldron. The sons Ashmor and Harving were not in evidence; no

more was Duissane.

Glinnes watched five minutes. Vang Drosset finished the *cazaldo* and flung the husk at the fire. Then, hands on knees, he turned and spoke to Tingo, who continued her work.

Glinnes jumped down the bank to his boat and drove home at full speed.

An hour later he returned. During Glay's sojourning with the Trevanyi he had used their costume; these garments Glinnes now wore, as well as a Trevanyi turban. A young cavout lay on the floor of the boat, head muffled and legs tied. The boat also carried three empty cartons, several good iron pots and a shovel.

Glinnes took the boat to where he had previously run it ashore. He climbed up the bank and observed the Drosset camp through binoculars.

The cauldron simmered over the fire. Tingo was nowhere to be seen. Vang Drosset sat on the bench carving a baulk of dako. Glinnes stared intently. Would Vang Drosset be using his knife? Chips and shavings effortlessly departed the dako, and Vang Drosset approvingly examined the knife from time to time.

Glinnes brought the cavout up from the boat, and removing the muffle, tethered the creature by one hind leg so that it might wander a few yards out upon the common.

Glinnes concealed himself behind a clump of hushberry, where he muffled the lower part of his face in the loose tail of the turban.

Vang Drosset carved the dako. He paused, stretched his arms, and noted the cavout. He watched it a moment, then raising to his feet scrutinized the

entire common. No one in sight. He wiped the knife and tucked it into his boot. Tingo Drosset put her head from the tent; Vang Drosset had a word with her. She came forth and looked dubiously at the cavout. Vang Drosset set off across the common, walking with an air of furtive purpose. Ten yards from the cavout he seemed to see it for the first time, and halted as if in wonder. He noticed the tether and traced it to the casammon tree. He took four quiet steps forward, craning his neck. He saw the boat and stopped short, while his eyes performed an inventory of its contents. A shovel, several useful pots, and what might those cartons contain? He licked his lips, looked sharply right and left. Peculiar. Probably the work of a child. Still, why not take a look in the cartons? Certainly no harm in a look.

Vang Drosset walked cautiously down the bank, and he never knew what struck him. Glinnes, fury surging in his veins, leapt forth and almost tore Vang Drosset's head off with a pair of tremendous blows over each ear. Vang Drosset fell to the ground. Glinnes pushed his face into the mud, tied his hands behind his back, lashed his knees and ankles with a length of rope he had brought for the purpose. Then he gagged and blind-folded Vang Drosset, who was now uttering stertorous moans.

He brought the knife from Vang Drosset's black boot: his own. A delight to have the keen blade once more in his possession! He searched Vang Drosset's garments, slicing them with the knife to facilitate examination. Vang Drosset's purse held only twenty ozols, which Glinnes appropriated. He

pulled off Vang Drosset's boots and sliced open the soles. He found nothing and threw the boots away.

Vang Drosset carried no large sum of money on his person. Glinnes gave him a kick in the ribs for disappointment. He looked across the commons, to observe Tingo Drosset on her way to the outhouse. Glinnes hoisted the cavout to his shoulder, concealing his face and marched across the commons. He reached the maroon tent just as Tingo Drosset completed her errand. He looked into the maroon tent. Empty. He walked to the orange tent. Empty. He stepped inside. Tingo Drosset spoke to his back: "Looks to be a good beast. But don't take it inside! What's the matter with you? Slaughter it down by the water."

Glinnes put down the animal and waited. Tingo Drosset, expostulating for the strange behaviour of her husband, entered the tent, Glinnes threw his turban over her head and bore her to the ground. Tingo Drosset squawked and cursed at this unexpected act of her husband's.

"Another sound from you," growled Glinnes, "I'll slit your throat ear to ear! Lie quiet if you know what's good for you!"

"Vang! Vang!" screeched Tingo Drosset. Glinnes thrust the tail of the turban into her mouth.

Tingo was squat and sturdy and caused Glinnes considerable exertion before she lay helplessly tied, blindfolded and gagged. Glinnes' hand smarted from a bite. Tingo Drosset's head ached from the retaliatory blow. Not likely that Tingo Drosset would carry the family money, but stranger

things had happened. Glinnes gingerly examined her garments while she groaned and grunted, thrashed and jerked in horrified outrage, expecting the worst.

He searched the black tent, then the orange tent, in a corner of which Duissane had ranged a few trinkets and keepsakes, and last the maroon tent. He found no money, nor had he expected to do so; the Trevanyi habit was to bury their valuables.

Glinnes seated himself on Vang Drosset's bench. Where would he bury money, were he Vang Drosset? The location must be convenient to hand and unmistakably identified by some sort of indicator; a post, a rock, a bush, a tree. The spot would be somewhere within the immediate field of vision; Vang Drosset would like to keep the hiding place under his benign surveillance. Glinnes looked here and there. Directly in front of him the cauldron hung over the fire, with a rude table and a pair of benches to the side. Only a few feet away the ground had been seared by the heat of another fire. . . The old fire-site seemed a few steps more convenient than the spot where the cauldron now hung. No explanation for the peculiar habits of the Trevanyi, thought Glinnes. At the camp on Rabendary. . . The thought trailed off as Glinnes recalled the camp on Rabendary Island, with the ground freshly dug on the site of the camp fire.

Glinnes nodded sagely. Just so. He rose to his feet and walked to the fire. He moved tripod and cauldron, and using an old broken-hafted spade thrust the fire aside. The baked soil below yielded easily to the spade. Six inches

below the surface the spade scraped on a black iron plate. Glinnes tipped up the iron to reveal a cake of dry clay, which he also removed. The cavity below held a pottery jar. Glinnes drew forth the jar. It contained a bundle of red and black hundred-ozol notes and a second bundle of blue and green thousand-ozol notes. Glinnes nodded complacently and tucked all in his pocket.

The cavout, now grazing, had defecated. Glinnes scraped the droppings into the pottery jar, replaced it in the cavity, and arranged all as before, with the fire burning under the cauldron. To casual inspection, nothing had been disturbed.

Shouldering the cavout, Glinnes strode back across the common, to where he had left his boat. Vang Drosset had been struggling to free himself, to no avail, and had only rolled himself down the slope into the mud at the water's edge. Glinnes smiled with indulgent amusement, and with all Vang Drosset's wealth in his pocket forbore kicking the contorted shape. He tethered the cavout in the stern of the boat and cast off. A hundred yards along the shore a giant casammon tree sprawled its twisted branches over the water. Glinnes drove the boat through the reeds to one of the crooked roots, and made fast the painter, then climbed from the root into the branches. Through a gap in the foliage he could see the Drosset camp, which appeared quiet.

Glinnes made himself comfortable and counted the money. In the first bundle he reckoned three thousand-ozol certificates, four hundred and six tens. Glinnes chuckled in satisfaction.

He removed the band from the second bundle, which was wound around a golden fob: fourteen hundred-ozol certificates. Glinnes paid them no heed, staring instead at the golden fob, eery chills tickling his back. The fob he remembered well; it had belonged to his father. There: ideograms for the name Jut Hulden. And below a second set of ideograms: Shira Hulden.

There were two possibilities. The Drossets had either robbed Shira alive; or they had robbed him dead. And these were the boon comrades of his brother Glay! Glinnes spat toward the ground.

He sat now on the branch, his brain roiling with excitement and horrified disgust. Shira was dead. The Drossets could never have taken his money otherwise; this was now his conviction.

He sat watching and waiting. His euphoria waned and also his horror; he sat passively. An hour passed and part of another. Up from the dock on Ilfish Water came three persons: Ashmor, Harving and Duissane. Ashmor and Harving went directly to the orange tent; Duissane stood stark still, apparently hearing a sound from Tingo. She ran into the maroon tent and instantly pushed her head out to call her brothers. She disappeared once more into the tent. Ashmor and Harving joined her. Five minutes later they slowly emerged in voluble conversation. Tingo, apparently none the worse for her experience, came forth. She pointed across the common. Ashmor and Harving set off, and in due course found and released Vang Drosset. The three returned across the common, the sons talking and gesticu-

lating, Vang Drosset hobbling on bare feet, holding his tattered clothing close about himself. At the camp he looked all about, and especially he studied the fire.

Apparently it had not been disturbed. He went into the maroon tent. The sons stood arguing with Tingo, who was now making hysterical expostulations, pointing across the common. Vang Drosset came forth from the maroon tent, once more fully clad. He marched up to Tingo and cuffed her; she drew back bawling in anger. He came for her again; she seized a stout branch and stood her ground; Vang Drosset turned gloomily away. He went to look more closely at the camp-fire, and bent his head sharply to see embers and ashes where Glinnes had shifted the fire. He gave a hoarse call, audible to Glinnes in the tree. Jerking the tripod aside, he kicked the fire flying, and with his bare fingers tore up the iron plate. Then the clay block. Then the pottery jar. He looked within. He looked up at Ashmor and Harving, who stood by expectantly.

Vang Drosset raised his arms high in a magnificent gesture of despair. He dashed the pot to the ground; he jumped up and down on the shards; he kicked the fire and sent the brands flying; he held aloft his knotted arms and raved curses to all directions of the compass.

Now was the time to depart, thought Glinnes. He slipped down from the tree, stepped into his boat, and drove back to Rabendary Island. A highly satisfactory day. The Trevanyi garments had guarded his identity; the Drossets might suspect but they could

not know. At this moment all the Trevanyi of the region were suspect, and the Drossets would sleep little this night as they debated the culpability of each.

Glinnes prepared himself a meal and ate out on the verandah. Afternoon became avness, that melancholy dying-time of day, when all the sky and far spaces became suffused with the color of watered milk. The chime of the telephone provided a sudden discord. Glinnes went within to find the face of Thammas, Lord Gensifer, looking forth from the screen. Glinnes touched the vision push-button. "Good afternoon, Lord Gensifer."

"A good afternoon to you, Glinnes Hulden! Are you ready to play hussade? I don't mean at this very instant of course."

Glinnes responded with a cautious question of his own. "I take it your plans have matured?"

"Yes; the Fleharish Gorgons are now organized and ready to begin practice. I have your name penciled in at right strike."

"And who is left strike?"

Lord Gensifer looked down at his list. "A very promising young man by the name of Savat. You two should make a brilliant combination."

"Savat? I've never heard of him. Who are the wings?"

"Lucho and Helsing."

"Hmm. None of these names are familiar. Are these the players you originally had in mind?"

"Lucho, of course. As for the others—well, that list was always tentative, to be amended whenever something better could be arranged. As

you well know, Glinnes, some of these established players are fairly inflexible. We're better off with people willing and anxious to learn. Enthusiasm, zest, dedication! These are the qualities which make for winning!"

"I see. Who else has signed up?"

"Iskelatz and Wilmer Guff are the rovers; how does that sound? You won't find two better rovers in the prefecture. The guards—Ramos is a crackerjack—and Pylan who is also very good. Sinforetta and 'Bump' Candolf are not quite so mobile but they are solid; no one will drive them aside. I'll play captain and—"

"Eh? What's this? Did I hear you correctly?"

Lord Gensifer frowned. "I'll play captain," he said in a measured voice. "And that more or less is the team, except for substitutes."

Glinnes was silent a moment or two. Then he asked: "What about the fund?"

"The fund will be 3,000 ozols," said Lord Gensifer primly. For the first few games we'll play a conservative fifteen hundred ozols, at least until the team jells."

"I see. When and where will you practice?"

"At Saurkash field, tomorrow morning. I take it then that you'll definitely play with the Gorgons?"

"I'll certainly come down tomorrow and we'll see how things go. But let me be candid, Lord Gensifer. A captain is the most important man on the team. He can make us or break us. We need an experienced captain. I doubt if you have that experience."

Lord Gensifer became haughty. "I

have made a thorough study of the game. I've gone through Kalenshenko's *Hussade Tactics* three times; I've mastered the *Ordinary Hussade Manual*; I've explored all the latest theories, such as Counterflow Principle, the Double Pyramid System, Overvallation—"

"All this may be true, Lord Gensifer. Many people can theorize about the game, but the reflexes are ultimately important, and unless you've played a great deal—"

Lord Gensifer said stiffly: "If you'll do your best, everyone else will do theirs. Is there anything more? . . . At the fourth gong, then." The screen went dead.

Glinnes growled in dismay. For half a broken ozol he'd tell Lord Gensifer to play captain, forward, rover, guard and sheirl together. Lord Gensifer as captain indeed!

At least he had his money back, with compensation for the beating. Almost five thousand ozols: a tidy sum, which he ought to put in a safe place.

Glinnes sealed the money in a pottery jar like that the Drossets had used. He buried it in the back yard.

An hour later a boat issued from Il-fish Water and came across Ambal Broad. Within sat Vang Drosset and his two sons. As they passed the Rabendary dock, Vang Drosset rose to his feet and scrutinized the Hulden boat with eyes like needles. Glinnes had removed all the goods with which he had tempted Vang Drosset; the boat was undistinguishable from a hundred others. Glinnes sat on the verandah, feet on the rail. Vang Drosset and his sons looked from the boat to Glinnes,

eyes full of suspicion; Glinnes returned the gaze impassively.

The Drosset boat continued up Farwan Water, the Drossets muttering among themselves and looking back toward Glinnes. There went the men who had killed his brother, thought Glinnes.

CHAPTER 10

LORD GENSIFER, wearing a new maroon and black uniform, stood on a bench and addressed his players. "This is an important day for all of us, and for the history of hussade in Jolany Prefecture! Today we start to mold the most efficient, adroit and ruthless team ever to ravage the hussade fields of Merland. Some of you are proficient already, with reputations; others are still unknown—"

Glinnes, considering the fifteen men around him, reflected that the proportion of these two sorts was on the order of one in eight.

"—but by dint of dedication, discipline and sheer—" here, Lord Gensifer used the word *kercha'an*: effort conducing to superhuman feats of strength and will "—we will sweep all before us! We'll expose the fundament of every virgin between here and Port Jaime! We'll carry booty home in buckets; we'll be rich and famous, one and all!

"But first the toil and sweat of preparation. I have diligently researched the theory of hussade; I know Kalenshenko word for word. Everyone agrees: defeat your opponents' strength and you've got the gold ring in your grasp. That means we must out-leap and out-swing the best forwards

around; we've got to tub the sternest guards of Jolany; we've got to out-think the craftiest strategists of Trullion!

"Now to work. I want the forwards to criss-cross the tanks, buffing* three procedures at each station. Establish a rhythm, you forwards. The rovers will go through standard drill, and the guards as well. We've got to master the fundamentals! I'd like to think that instead of two rovers and four guards, that we have six agile powerful rovers playing all over the back stations, capable at any time of ramming home the piston." Lord Gensifer here alluded to the tactic of a strong team sweeping a weaker team ahead of it up the field. "All to work! Let's drill like men inspired!"

So the practise began with Lord Gensifer running here and there, praising, criticising, castigating, stimulating his team with shrill *ki-yik-yik-yiks*.

Twenty minutes later Glinnes had gauged the quality of the team. Left wing Lucho and right rover Wilmer Guff had been components of that hypothetical team Lord Gensifer had proposed to Glinnes, and were both excellent players, deft, sure, aggressive. Left rover Iskelatz also seemed a sound player, if of a self-contained, even surly disposition. Iskelatz clearly disliked strenuous practise and preferred to reserve his best energies for the game itself: a trait which almost immediately exasperated Lord Gensifer. Left strike Savat and right wing Helsing were young men, alert, active, but somewhat raw and, during buff-drill, Glinnes con-

*Buff: a three-foot padded club, used to thrust opponents into the tanks.

tinually fainted them off-balance. Guards Ramos; Pylan and Sinforetta were respectively, slow, inept, and overweight; only left middle guard 'Bump' Candolph combined sufficient mass, strength, cleverness and agility to qualify as an able athlete. A hussade truism asserted that a poor forward might defeat a poor guard but a good guard would restrain a good forward. A team lived by its forwards and died by its guards: so stated another aphorism of the game. Glinnes foresaw a number of long afternoons unless Lord Gensifer were able to strengthen his back-field.

The Gorgons, then, in their present phase, fielded a fair front line, a sound center and a weak back-field. Lord Gensifer's capacity as captain was difficult to assess. The ideal captain, like the ideal rover, could play at any station of the field, though some captains, like old Neronavy of the Tanchinaros, never left the protection of their hanges.

In regard to Lord Gensifer, Glinnes reserved judgement. He seemed quick and strong enough, if somewhat overweight and sluggish on the swings. . . Lord Gensifer uttered one of his '*ki-yik-yik-yiks*'. "You forwards there! Zest now, let's see those feet twinkle; are you a quartet of bears? Glinnes, must you caress Savat so lovingly with your buff? If he can't block you let him feel it! And you guards: let's see you prance! Knees bent, like angry animals! Remember, everytime they take hold of that gold ring it costs us money . . . Better. . . Let's run through a few plays. First the Center Jet Series from the Lantoun System. . ."

The team drilled for two hours in an

amiable spirit, then halted for lunch at the Magic Trench. After lunch Lord Gensifer diagrammed a group of formations he had conceived himself, variations on the difficult Diagonal Sequences. "If we can master these patterns, we thrust irresistibly against both wings and rovers, then when they collapse inward we plunge down either the right or left lane."

"All very well," said Lucho, "but notice, you leave the wing lanes unprotected, and there's not a feather to prevent a counter-plunge down our own outside lanes."

Lord Gensifer frowned. "The rovers must swing to the side in such a case. Timing here is essential."

The team rather languidly ran through Lord Gensifer's deployments, for the warm time of day had arrived, and all were tired after the morning's efforts. Finally Lord Gensifer, half-exasperated, half-rueful, dismissed the team. "Tomorrow same time; but come expecting a workout. Today was a vacation. I know only one way to field a team, and that's drill!"

Three weeks the Gorgons practised, with uneven results. Certain of the players became bored; certain others growled and muttered at Lord Gensifer's chivvying. Glinnes considered Lord Gensifer's repertory of plays far too complicated and chancy; he felt the back-field to be too weak to allow an effective attack. The rovers were forced to protect the guards and the forwards were therefore limited in their range. Attrition took a toll. Left rover Iskelatz, who was competent but too casual to please Lord Gensifer, resigned from the team; as did right wing Helving, in

whom Glinnes discerned the potentialities for excellence. The replacements were both weaker men. Lord Gensifer dropped Pylan and Sinforetta, the two most sluggish guards, and recruited a pair only slightly better, both of whom, so Glinnes learned from Carbo Gilweg, had been unable to win places with the Saurkash Tanchinaros.

Lord Gensifer entertained the team at Gensifer Manor and introduced the Gorgon sheirl: Zuranie Delcargio from the village Puzzlewater, so named for the nearby hot sulfur springs. Zuranie was pallidly pretty, if thin, and shy to the point of speechlessness. Her personality aroused Glinnes to wonder: what force or ambition could impel such a girl to risk public exposure? Whenever she was addressed, she jerked her head away so that long blonde hair fell across her face and spoke only three words during the course of the evening. She displayed not an inkling of *saschei*, that wild and gallant elán which inspires a team to transcend its theoretical limitations.

Lord Gensifer took occasion to announce the schedule of forthcoming games, the first of which would take place two weeks hence at Saurkash Stadium, against the Voulash Gannets.

A day or two later Zuranie came to watch the practise. Rain had fallen during the morning and a raw wind blew out of the south; the players were glum and peevish. Lord Gensifer ran up and down the field like a great bumbling insect, expostulating, wheedling, crying "*Ki-yik-yik-yik!*" to no effect. Huddling from the wind beside the pump-man's hut Zuranie watched the sluggish maneuvers with

foreboding and despondency. At last she made a timid motion to Lord Gensifer. He jogged across the field. "Yes, sheirl?"

Zuranie spoke in a petulant voice: "Don't call me sheirl; I don't know why I ever thought I'd want to do this. Really! I could never never stand on that place, with all those people watching me. I think I would absolutely die. Please, Lord Gensifer, don't be angry, but I simply can't."

Lord Gensifer raised his eyes to the scudding gray clouds, not far overhead. "My dear Zuranie! Of course you'll be with us! We play the Voulash Gannets in two days! You'll be famous and glorified!"

Zuranie made a helpless motion. "I don't want to be a famous sheirl; I don't want all my clothes pulled off—"

"That only happens to the losing sheirl," Lord Gensifer pointed out. "Do you think the Gannets can beat us, with Tyran Lucho and Glinnes Hulden and me and Bump Candolf ranging the stations? We'll sweep them back like chaff; we'll tank them so often they'll think they are fish!"

Zuranie was only partially reassured. She gave a tremulous sigh and said no more. Lord Gensifer, at last understanding that no useful purpose could be served by prolonging the practice, called a halt. "Same time tomorrow," he told the team. "We've got to put snap into our lateral movement, especially in the back court. You guards, you've got to range the field! This is hussade, not a tea-party for you and your toy animals. Tomorrow at the fourth chime."

THE VOULASH GANNETS were a young team lacking all reputation; the players seemed striplings. The Gannet captain was Denzel Warhound, a lanky tow-headed youth with the wise sly eyes of a mythical creature. The sheirl was a buxom round-faced girl with a flying mop of dark curls; in the pre-game march about the field she conducted herself with full-blooded enthusiasm, strutting, bouncing, waving her arms; and the Gannets loped along beside her, barely able to contain their nervous activity. By contrast the Gorgons seemed stately and dour, with sheirl Zuranie a frail asthenic wraith. Her evident despair caused Lord Gensifer an exasperation he did not dare to express for fear of demoralizing her completely. "Brave girl; there's a brave girl!" he declared, as if consoling a sick animal. "It won't be all that bad; you'll see I'm right!" But Zuranie's apprehensions were not dispelled.

Today the Gorgons wore their maroon and black uniforms for the first time. The helmets were especially dramatic, molded of a dull-rose metalloid, with black fleurettes for cheek-pieces. Black spikes bristled from the scalps, the eyeholes cunningly simulated the pupils of great staring eyes; the noses split to become black plush maws, from which hung lank red tongues. Some of the team thought the costume extravagant; a few disliked the flapping tongues; most were apathetic. The Gannets wore a brown uniform with an orange helmet, distinguished only by a crest of green feathers. Contrasting the mettlesome Gannets with the splendid but sluggish Gorgons, Glinnes felt impelled to discuss tactics with Lord Gensifer.

"Notice the Gannets if you will: they're like colt kevals, full of vigor and nonsense. I've seen such teams before, and we can expect aggressive, even rash, play. Our job is to make them beat themselves. We'll want to use our traps to cut off their forwards so that our guards and rovers can double on them. If we use our weight, we've got a chance to defeat them."

Lord Gensifer raised his eyebrows in displeasure. "A chance to defeat them"? What nonsense is this? We'll sweep them up and down the field like a dog chasing chickens! We shouldn't even be playing them except that we need the practise."

"Still, I advise a careful game. Let them make the mistakes, or they might make capital of ours."

"Bah, Glinnes; I believe you're past your prime."

"To the extent that I'm not playing for fun. I want to earn money—nine thousand ozols, to be exact, and I want to win."

"Do you think your need is unique?" demanded Lord Gensifer in a voice thick with rage. "How do you think I financed the treasure-box? Bought the uniforms? Paid team expenses? I drained myself bloodless."

"Very well," said Glinnes. "You need money; I need money. So let's win, by playing the game we're best able to play."

"We'll win, never fear!" declared Lord Gensifer, once again bluff and hearty. "Do you think I'm a tyro? I know the game up one side and down the other. Now enough of this wailing; I declare you're as timid as Zuranie. Notice the crowd: a good ten thousand

people. That'll add ozols to the booty*!"

Glinnes nodded gloomily. "If we win." He noticed a man sitting alone in a box at the bottom of the Elite tier: Lute Casagave, with binoculars and camera. The gear was not unusual; many devotees of the game recorded the denuding of the sheirl in music and image; notable collections of such events existed. Glinnes nonetheless was surprised to find in Lute Casagave so lively an interest in hussade; he seemed not the type for frivolity.

The field judge went to the microphone; the music dwindled away; a hush came over the crowd. "Sport-folk of Saurkash and Jolany Prefecture! Today a match between the gallant Voulash Gannets and their sheirl Baroba Felice; and the indomitable Gorgons of Thammas Lord Gensifer, with the lovely sheirl Zuranie Delcargo! The teams pledge the *isthoun* of their sheirls with all their valor and two treasures of fifteen hundred ozols. May the winners enjoy glory and the losers take pride in their fortitude and the tragic purity of their sheirl! Captains, approach!"

Lord Gensifer and Denzel Warhound came forward. A toss of the coin gave first call to the Gorgons; open transmission for the Gorgons would be signalized by the green light, with the red light for the Gannets.

"The penalties will be called with rigor," stated the field judge. "There must be neither kicking nor pulling; no

verbal interchanges. I will not tolerate buff-clinging; a blow must fall cleanly. The team on defence must utter no distracting sounds. I am experienced in these matters as are the monitors; we will be vigilant. A player in the foul tank must clasp the hand of his rescuer; a desultory wave or gesture will not be sufficient. Have you any questions? Very good, gentlemen; dispose your forces and may the *isthoun* of your sheirls impel you both to noble feats. The green light to the Gorgons; the red light to the Gannets!"

The teams deployed to their stations; the Trevanyi orchestra played the traditional music as the captains conducted the sheirls to their respective pedestals.

The music stopped; the captains went out to their hanges and tested their signal systems, each transmitting information from the captain to players by wave-lengths fixed by the referee. Now came that electric moment before the first flash of light. The spectators were silent; the players strained with tension; the sheirls stood eager and palpitant, each willing with all her heart's intensity that the detested virgin at the other end of the field be the one to be bared and humiliated.

A gong! The signal lights flashed green. For twenty seconds the Gorgon Captain might call plays, either vocally or through the radio system which connected his microphone with the speakers inside the Gorgon helmets. The Gannets must act or react in silence. Lord Gensifer deployed the first phase of Jet Stream Attack: a wedge-shaped driving tactic of strikes and wings up the middle, with rovers covering the side lanes. Lord Gensifer

*Half of the gate receipts were customarily divided between the competing teams in the proportion of three parts to the winning team, one part to the losers.

clearly had ignored Glinnes' advice. Cursing under his breath Glinnes moved forward; unopposed he jumped the moat as did left strike Savat. The Gannet forwards had all slid like oil; now all leapt the moat to attack Sarkado, the Gorgon's left rover. Glinnes met the Gannet left rover; the two feinted with buffs, prodded and pushed; the Gannet rover gave way. Glinnes' instincts told him exactly when to turn to meet the rush of Gannet right rover. Glinnes struck him across the neck while he was still off-balance, and toppled him into the tank. He struck water with a most satisfactory splash.

Another splash; a Gannet guard had tanked Cherst, the right wing.

Lord Gensifer's voice came sharp into the earphones. "*Ki-yik-yik-yik!* Thirteen-thirty! Go then, Glinnes; Lucho, watch the rover! *Yik ki-yik!*"

The green light changed to red and Gorgon transmission was interrupted. Denzel Warhound called signals and brought his hange to the moat. The middle guards jumped forward, two against Glinnes; he engaged them, hooked and thrust with such effect that they confused each other. Glinnes swung to Way 3, which was open to the pedestal, but the guards recovered; one ran to cover the mouth of Way 3; the center guards meanwhile swung behind Glinnes. He tanked one; Savat tanked the other; both turned to race for the Gannet pedestal with only two guards left to halt them. The light changed to green; Lord Gensifer bawled desperate orders. A gong! Glinnes looked back to see a Gannet forward on the pedestal with Zuranie's gold ring in his hand. Play halted; Lord Gensifer grudgingly

paid ransom to Denzel Warhound.

The teams returned to their respective territories. Lord Gensifer spoke in irritation: "Execution, that's the word! We're falling over our own feet. They're actually no match for us; they caught us by a fluke."

Glinnes restrained the old maxim: *In hussade no flukes*. He said, "Let's advance at them across the field, station by station; don't let them get back to the guards!" For the Gannets had gained the pedestal by a simple feint and whirl past the inept Ramos.

Lord Gensifer ignored Glinnes. "The Jet Stream again, and this time let's do it right! Rovers, guard the side alleys; wings, blast up the center behind the strikes. We won't let these ninny-boys tank us again!"

The team deployed; the gong sounded and the green light gave the offensive to the Gorgons. "Thirteen-thirty, *ki-yik!*" cried Lord Gensifer, "Right at 'em all the way to the belly-ring."

Again the Gannet forwards slid aside to allow Savat and Glinnes across the moat. This time, however, they swung behind Glinnes and to his intense annoyance tripped him. He might still have held his own except for the rover swinging in upon the trapeze to hurl him into the tank.

Glinnes above all else hated to be tanked; the process was cold and wet and injured his self-esteem. Disconsolately he waded back under the ways and squelched up the ladder to the Gorgon's base area. He surfaced at an appropriate time, to engage a Gannet wing who already had worked his way almost to the pedestal. In a wet fury,

Glinnes dazed him with thrusts and feints and toppled him head over heels into the tank.

Green light on. "Forty-five-twelve," cried Lord Gensifer. Glinnes groaned: Lord Gensifer's most complicated play, the Grenade, or double diagonal. No choice but to run the play; he would do his best. The forwards came together at the moat, and finding no opposition at the center bridge, sprang across in different directions, followed by the rovers. The single faint hope of success, thought Glinnes, was to drive upon the Gannet sheirl before the startled Gannets could reach Sheirl Zuranie. The Gannet guards shifted to the end of the way; two rovers were tanked, a Gannet and a Gorgon; and now Lord Gensifer ordered two guards across the moat, just as the light turned red.

Denzel Warhound stood by his hange, inviolate, grinning in total composure. He called his signals; both Gorgon guards were intercepted and tanked; Glinnes, Savat and the wings, recognizing disaster, raced back to guard the pedestal; Glinnes reached base-area just in time to drive a Gannet forward back from the pedestal and into the tank; Lucho did the same for another, but almost the whole Gannet team was storming the base area. The tanked guards surfaced, wet and angry, and by dint of fury and superior weight bore the Gannets back.

Green light; Lord Gensifer's call: "Forty-five-twelve; we've to 'em now, lads; the way is clear! Go, go!"

Glinnes, furious over the call, disengaged, and ran Lord Gensifer's pattern, along with the other forwards. The light but agile Gannet guards broke back

and kept pace with them. . . A gong. By some miracle of stealth and agility (more likely by someone's sheer ineptitude, thought Glinnes), one of the Gannet rovers had gained the pedestal, and had seized the gold ring at Zuranie's waist.

With trembling fingers Lord Gensifer paid another ransom. In conference his voice was hoarse with emotion. "You men aren't executing; we can't win if everyone walks around like sleep-walkers! We've got to take the game to these fellows! Why, they're hardly more than boys! This time let's make the play go. Double-diagonal, again, and everyone do his duty!"

The gong, the green light, Lord Gensifer's encouraging "Ki-yik", and the Gorgons deployed in Lord Gensifer's Double-Diagonal.

A double gong, signifying a foul. Lord Gensifer himself had clutched the buff of the Gannet rover, and was consigned to the foul tank up at the back of the Gannet base, where he hunched in sullen fury. Glinnes, the right forward, became acting captain.

The gong sounded, and the light was still green. Glinnes had no need to call a play; he gestured left and right; the wings and forwards advanced to the moat; the light went red. The Gannets, elated by their two-ring score, feinted at the left and sent two forwards across at the right side-way; with a rover leaping the moat. The rover and one of the forwards were tanked; the other forward retreated, and Denzel Warhound called back his attack until the tanked men returned to action. Green light. Lord Gensifer, in the foul tank, made urgent gestures appealing

for rescue; Glinnes studiously looked the other way. He pointed the rovers to the side-ways, summoned the two middle guards forward. Red light. The Gannets massed on the left, but forebore to cross the moat; the crafty Denzel Warhound preferred to bide his time until he could catch the Gorgons in disequilibrium.

Green light. Glinnes sent the Gorgon forwards across the moat and brought the middle guards up to the center bridge: a slow exertion of mass and pressure upon a faster but lighter team. Two Gorgon wings were tanked, and two Gannet strikes; the Gorgons had established a solid line on the Gannet side of the field, while Lord Gensifer beckoned frantically for rescue. The Gorgons pressed slowly up the ways, using their weight and experience to advantage, compressing the Gannets into their base-area. Three Gannets were tanked, one after the other; then two more, then the gong sounded. Tyran Lucho had gained the pedestal, his hand on the gold ring. Grim and disapproving, Lord Gensifer came up from the foul tank and took ransom from the Gannet captain.

The teams returned to base deployment. Lord Gensifer, angry from his long confinement in the foul tank, declared: "Rash, too rash tactics! When a team is two rings down, the guards should never move so far past the moat: that's one of Kalenshenko's first dictums!"

"We took their ring," said Lucho, the most outspoken man on the team. "That's the important matter."

"Regardless," said Lord Gensifer in a steely voice, "we will continue to play

a sound basic game. They have the light; we'll use the No. 4 Feint."

Lucho was not to be silenced. "Let's simply mass on the moat; we don't need traps or feints or fancy tactics; simply basic play!"

"This is a hussade game," declared Lord Gensifer, "not a gang-fight. We'll show 'em tactics to make their heads swim."

The Gannets charged the moat with reckless verve; Denzel Warhound clearly intended to forestall the Gorgon tactics of the previous period. Gannets leaped the moat all across the field, while Denzel Warhound planted his hange on the center bridge, from which he could be dislodged only by Lord Gensifer. Right wing Cherst tanked the Gannet rover and was tanked in turn; Glinnes was forced to guard the right side-way.

Green light. "Forty-five-twelve!" cried Lord Gensifer. "This time, lads! Show them class!"

"I think we'll be showing them something else," Glinnes told Wilmer Guff. "Namely, Zuranie."

"He's the captain."

"So then—here we go."

Denzel Warhound might have been anticipating this exact play; his forwards returned to trap Glinnes, and again he was tanked by a swinging rover; Lucho met a similar fate on the opposite side. Together they made the best possible haste to the ladder, only to hear the Trevanyi orchestra break into the *Ode to Beauty Jubilant*.

"And there we have it," said Glinnes.

They surfaced in time to see Denzel Warhound on the pedestal, his hand on the gold ring. Zuranie looked up into

the sky with a dazed expression. "Where is your money? Five hundred ozols will save your sheirl; five hundred ozols for her *isthoune*; is this so dear?"

"I'd pay it," Glinnes remarked to Wilmer Guff, "except that it would be money thrown away. Lord Gensifer would run me back and forth through his Double-Diagonal till I drowned."

The music surged loud: stately cadences which tickled the hair at the nape of the neck and brought a dryness to the mouth. From the crowd came a soft sound, a fluting of exaltation. Zuranie's face was frozen in a white mask: impossible to guess her emotions. The music halted: a low-voiced gong sounded: once, twice, three times, and the captain pulled the ring. Zuranie's gown came away; her shrinking flesh was exposed on the pedestal.

At the opposite end of the field Sheirl Baroba Felice performed an impromptu jig of delight, and jumped down into the arms of the Gannets who now departed the field.

Lord Gensifer silently brought a black velvet cloak to cover Zuranie; the Gorgons also departed the field.

In the dressing room Lord Gensifer bravely broke the silence. "Well, men, this wasn't our day; so much is clear. the Gannets are a far better team than is supposed; their speed was a bit too much for us. Everybody out to Gensifer Manor; we won't call it a victory celebration, but we'll test the color of some good Sokal wine. . ."

AT GENSIFER MANOR Lord Gensifer regained his composure. He circulated affably among those of his aristocratic

friends who had visited the Saurkash Stadium to watch him at his latest fad. Around the loaded buffets, under the glitter of the antique chandeliers, beside the magnificent collection of Rol Star gonfalons, the banter played back and forth.

"Never expected such speed from you, Thammas, till you went to denude the bouncy little Gannet sheirl!"

"Ha ha! Yes, I'm a real pacer where the ladies are concerned!"

"We've long know Thammas to be a great sportsman, but why oh why did the Gorgons take their only ring while he sat in the tank?"

"Resting, Jonas, only resting; why work when you can sit in nice cool water?"

"Good group, Thammas, good group. Your lads do you credit. Keep them up to snuff."

"Oh I will, sir, I will. No fear of that."

The Gorgons themselves stood somewhat stiffly to the side, or perched on the delicate jadewood furniture, sipping wines they had never before tasted, giving monosyllabic answers to the questions put by Lord Gensifer's friends. Lord Gensifer finally came up and spoke to them, by now in a benign mood. "Well then—no recriminations, no reproaches. I'll state only the obvious: I see room for improvement and by the stars—" here Lord Gensifer raised his arms to the ceiling in the posture of an outraged Zeus "—we'll achieve it. From the forwards, I'll have more snap and dash. From the rovers: decisive buffing, quicker reactions! Did your feet hurt today, rovers? So it seemed. From the guards: more fe-

rocity, more dependability. When the enemy confronts our guards, I want them to think only about home and mother. Any remarks?"

Glinnes looked off and up into the air, and thoughtfully sipped pale green Sokal wine from his goblet.

Lord Gensifer continued. "Our next opponents are the Tanchinaros; we meet them in two weeks at Saurkash Stadium. I'm sure that events will go differently. I've watched them; they're slow as Dido's one-legged grandmother. We'll simply stroll around them to the pedestal. We'll take their money and bare their sheirl, and be off and gone like Welshmen."

"Speaking of money," drawled Can-dolf, "how much is our treasure after today's fiasco? Also, who is our sheirl?"

"The treasure will be two thousand ozols," said Lord Gensifer, coldly. "The sheirl might be any of several delightful creatures anxious to share our ascendancy."

Lucho said, "The Tanchinaros are slow up front, but with guards like Gilweg, Etzing, Barreu and Shamoran, the forwards could play in wheel-chairs."

Lord Gensifer waved the remark aside. "A good team plays its own game and forces the enemy to react. The Tanchinaro guards are only flesh and bone; we'll tank them so often they'll think they're tanchinaros* in sheer reality!"

"A toast to this!" called out Chaim, Lord Shadrak. "To eleven dripping-wet Tanchinaros and their bare-bottomed sheirl!"

*Tanchinaro: a black and silver fish of the Far South Ocean.

AFTER LORD GENSIFER'S PARTY, Glinnes went to spend the night with Tyran Lucho, who lived on Altramar Island a few miles east of Five Islands, with the South Ocean a quarter mile south across a lagoon and a line of sand spits. A white beach was the Lucho front yard; Glinnes and Tyran arrived to find a star-watch in progress. Over a pair of soft red fires crabs, crayfish, sea-bulbs, pentabrachs, sourweed and a mix of smaller sea-stuffs grilled and sizzled. Kegs of beer had been broached; a table supported coarse crusty loaves, fruits and conserves. Thirty folk of all ages ate, drank, sang, played guitars and mouth-calliopes, romped in the sand, addressed themselves to someone they intended to lure up the beach later in the evening. Glinnes felt instantly at ease, in contrast to the restraint he had felt at Lord Gensifer's party, where the jocularly had been on a more formal level. Here were those Trills despised by Fanscherade: undisciplined, frivolous, gluttonous, amorous; some unkempt and dirty, others merely unkempt. Children played erotic games, and adults as well; Glinnes observed several noticeably under the influence of cauch. Each person wore those garments he deemed appropriate; a stranger might have thought himself at a fancy-dress charade. Tyran Lucho, conditioned and disciplined by hussade, used garments and manners less flamboyant; still, like Glinnes, he relaxed gratefully upon the sand with a mug of beer and a chino-leaf full of grilled sea-meats. The party was nominally a 'star-watch'; the air was soft and the stars

hung close like great paper lanterns, but a mood of revelry was on the group and there would be small pondering of the stars this night.

Tyran Lucho had played with teams of reputation; on the field he was regarded as a taciturn man of great skill and almost alone in his ability to break down the field through an apparently impervious front of opponents: dodging, feinting, swinging from way to way, or swinging out and snapping himself back, sometimes a trick which persuaded opponents to the ludicrous act of tanking themselves. Along with Wild Man Wilmer Guff, Lucho had been represented on Lord Gensifer's original dream-team. Glinnes settled himself beside Lucho and the two discussed the day's game. "Essentially," said Glinnes, "we're sound forward—with the exception of Clubfoot Chust—and pitifully weak backfield."

"True. Savat has excellent potential. Unfortunately Tammi confuses him and he doesn't know whether to run forward or back."

"Tammi" was the team's jocular term for Thammas Lord Gensifer.

"Agreed," said Glinnes. "Even Sarkado is at least adequate, though he's really too indecisive to make a good team."

"To win," said Lucho, "we need a back-field, but even more urgently we need a captain. Tammi doesn't know which direction he's going."

"Unfortunately it's his team."

"But it's our time and our profit!" declared Lucho with a vehemence that surprised Glinnes. "Also our reputation. It does a man no good to play with a set of buffoons."

"First of all," said Glinnes, "a man tends to relax his own standards of play."

"I've been thinking the matter over. I left the Poldan Avengers so that I could live at home, and I thought perhaps Lord Gensifer could field a team. But he'll never do so if he insists on running the team as if it were his private toy."

"Still: he's captain; who'd play his position? What about you?"

Lucho shook his head. "I don't have the patience. What about you?"

"I prefer to play strike. Candolf is pretty sound."

"He's possible, in a pinch. But I've got a better man in mind: Denzel Warhound."

Glinnes considered. "He's smart and he's quick, and he doesn't mind contact. He'd be a good one. How strong a Gannet is he?"

"He wants to play. The Gannets don't have a home stadium; theirs is a very make-shift operation. Warhound would switch if a good opportunity came up."

Glinnes emptied his mug of beer. "Tammi would lay an egg if he knew what we're talking about. . . Who is the pretty girl in the white smock? I ache to see her so lonely."

"She's second cousin to my brother's wife. Her name is Thaio and she's very sympathetic."

"I'll just go ask her if she wants to be a sheirl."

"She'll say that up till the age of nine this was her dearest ambition."

THE GAME between the Gorgons and the Tanchinaros occurred on the afternoon of a beautiful warm day, with
(continued on page 112)

Geo. Alec Effinger's stories have appeared up to now in our sister magazine, FANTASTIC STORIES—"The Eight-Thirty to Nine Slot" (April, 1971), "The Awesome Menace of the Polarizer" (December, 1971), "Rod Marquand's Jungle Adventure" (February, 1973)—and have been characterized by their satirical twists. Now he turns to a more straight-forward type of story—one in which Justine Benarcek must deal with a succession of tests to prove himself a loyal citizen, for these are—

HARD TIMES **GEO. ALEC EFFINGER**

Illustrated by JOE STATON

IT WAS STILL EARLY, not even eleven o'clock. The office of Justin Benarcek was quiet, calmer than it had been in many weeks. He heard no voices, just the rapid clicking of Miss Brant's typewriter beyond his richly stained door. Justin stood and stretched leisurely, taking a deep breath and letting an unfamiliar mood of well-being sweep over him. He went to the window and pulled back the heavy drapes.

Beyond the window it was a bright, clear August day. Sunlight streamed through the glass; the office was decorated in somber colors and dark woods, but the light overcame the oppressive atmosphere. The austere browns and heavy blues of his law books seemed more than just a shelter for the grim philosophy within. For no other reason than the beauty of the day Justin felt happy. He was smiling, and he slapped the narrow window sill in his good humor.

On an impulse he turned back to his

desk. He buzzed his secretary on the intercom.

"Yes, Mr. Benarcek?" she said.

"Miss Brant," he said, assuming a formal tone, "I was wondering if you had an unbreakable date for lunch this afternoon."

Miss Brant hesitated, no doubt expecting a sudden burden of work from her boss. "No, sir," she said slowly.

"Then let's go down to the Shalibet," he said. "Maybe we could take the rest of the afternoon off and do something." Miss Brant said nothing for a moment, and then told him that she'd love to.

"All right, then. Call and make the reservations." Justin sat in his expensive leather chair, closing his eyes and enjoying the feeling while it lasted. The sun was warm on his neck. For a while he dozed, until the intercom woke him.

"Mr. Benarcek?"

"Yes, Miss Brant," he said, yawning.

"Did you make those reservations?"

"Yes, sir. For one o'clock."

"What time is it now?"

"Twelve, sir. But there's a gentleman to see you."

"He doesn't have an appointment, does he? I thought I was pretty well free today." Justin was annoyed at the man already, for dispersing the warm, clinging, and rare sense of joy.

"No, sir. But he says that it's important. And he said to ask you if you remember 'The Trog'. He said you'd know."

The Trog! Bo Staefler, from his freshman year at Yale. It had been at least fifteen years since he'd even heard from Bo.

"It's all right, Miss Brant. I'll see him now. And don't worry; I'll be sure to get through before one. Give me a call in a half hour."

Justin ran a hand through his ruffled hair and straightened his tie. In a short while the door opened and Bo Staefler came into the office. He was balder, a lot heavier, but still the same huge, grinning man Justin had known so well in college. Justin stood and came around his desk to shake hands.

"Say, Justin, how are you?" asked Staefler.

"All right, Bo. Things are going okay. How are you?" Staefler just nodded. Justin suspected that his old friend was paying more than just a social call.

The two men sat down and talked about their shared foolishnesses of twenty years ago. Things Justin had gratefully buried in his memory were brought out and examined with a fierce, nostalgic pleasure.

"Remember those two old women we



picked up?" asked Staefler, more comfortable now, his tie loosened and his jacket thrown over the back of his chair. "We got them drunk and took them back to the Taft."

"They weren't so old," said Justin, laughing softly.

"They were thirty if they were a day," shouted Staefler.

"And now we're crowding forty."

"Yes," said Staefler. Both fell silent, thinking.

"How about when Trofell and Hanson threw the chair out of the window in Wright?" said Justin, wiping a tear from the corner of his eye.

"Wait a minute, Justin," said Staefler.

"And they were so angry at being canned that they chained all the gates to the Old Campus shut."

"Justin," said Staefler, "I have to talk with you."

Justin sighed. "What is it, Bo?"

"I'm in trouble."

Justin nodded; everyone who came to see him was in some sort of difficulty. It depressed him sometimes. That was why this morning's unexpected liberty had been so delicious. He leaned back in his chair and played absently with a pen on his blotter. "Tell me about it. Start at the beginning, talk slowly, and don't leave anything out."

Staefler took a deep breath. "I killed a person, Justin. About a year ago. A woman. I was drunk and I honestly didn't know what I was doing. I don't even know who she was. I just left her there. No one saw me. The police have never been able to figure it out, but I can't stand it anymore."

"Why tell me, Bo? Why not just go

away and forget it?"

"You don't know!" Staefler looked across the desk with a pitiable, pleading expression. When he spoke, his voice was strained and hoarse. "You can't imagine what I see, what I dream. The newspapers said it was *brutal*. It was. I . . . sometimes I . . ."

"It's all right, Bo." Every once in a while Justin fooled himself into believing that he could empathize with his clients, but he knew that their visions were, gratefully, denied to him.

"I just wanted to talk with someone, Justin. I haven't said a word before this. And you're a lawyer, a famous one. If ever something happens, I mean if the police ever . . . well, you know."

Justin didn't reply. He got up from the desk and looked out the window; forty-eight stories below, the city cowered away from him. Rooftops lay about him in random patches, covering the distance between him and the bay. Among the buildings the streets and the tiny vehicles ran like visceral messengers of a great concrete organism. The sun was still burning away, unchallenged by any cloud.

"You can do us both a favor, Bo," he said, his back still turned to his old friend. "Give me a phone number where I can reach you. Then go home for a few days. I don't know what to suggest. Maybe our Federal Services liaison can help you. But don't get yourself in an overwrought state. You won't be any good to anyone like that."

"Whatever you say, Justin." Justin could tell from Staefler's voice that he was weeping. "I don't have anyone now. I don't know what to do."

Justin went to Staefler's chair and

grasped his friend's shoulder. "You're my friend, Bo. I have a responsibility to you." Staefler looked up gratefully. He stood and began to say something. Then he stopped, took his jacket, turned, and left.

Justin stood by the empty chair for a few moments, frowning. Yes, he had a responsibility to his friend. But he had a duty to the Federal Services, to the system that he served. The intercom's buzz brought him out of his reveries.

"Is that all, Mr. Benarcek?"

"Yes, Miss Brant. Let's go to lunch now. No, wait a second. Get me the office of the District Attorney."

"Certainly, Mr. Benarcek. But I think you ought to lie down and take a nap."

"What? What are you talking about?"

"I mean it," said the secretary. "I think that you ought to take a nap."

Justin felt lightheaded. "Yes," he said, "you're right. I ought to take a nap."

THE FIRST THING that Justin saw when he awoke was a great, blinding light on the ceiling. Then he noticed the red, blue, and green wires at the corners of his vision. When he tried to move his head for a better view, he found that he couldn't.

Bit by strange bit, the scene grew more familiar. The unmistakable clean stink of a hospital. Hushed voices belonging to persons beyond his range of vision, speaking in an indecipherable jargon. Unpleasant sticky spots on his head and chest where, he now recalled, many wires had been placed.

He was in the Federal Services clinic.

He closed his eyes against the stabbing pain of the circular light. His mind was very dull, very drugged. He admitted his helplessness and surrendered. Soon the drugs would be flushed from his system, and the heavy, illegitimate security would expire. Justin relaxed into the lassitude and submitted to the busy hands of the medical attendants.

Hours later, dressed in a white, backless gown and sipping orange juice in bed, Justin was visited by a doctor. The man entered the ward briskly and walked to Justin's bed. He was harried and fatigued, but to Justin's still cloudy perceptions the doctor was at first only a white blur of lab coat and a short pendulum-swing of brown clipboard.

"Mr. J. Benarcek? I'm Doctor Rugiero. How are you feeling?"

Justin wasn't quite certain yet. "Hmmm? What?" he said.

The doctor frowned. "Still feeling a little groggy?" he asked. Justin nodded, and the doctor riffled a few pages on the clipboard. "I'm sorry, Mr. Benarcek," he said. "You were scheduled for Recovery last night, about ten, but you had an extremely long test sequence. You'll be feeling sharper in another two or three hours. Shall I come back then?"

"No, it's all right," said Justin, setting the orange juice on the small bedside table and letting his head fall heavily to the pillows propped up behind him. "Did I have the test?"

"One of them. You're here for the Services complex, aren't you?" Justin didn't know. The question must have been rhetorical, because no one outside the Federal Services knew anything about the government's internal proce-

dures. Justin had applied for a low-level office position; though he had no knowledge of selection techniques beyond the popular rumors, he hadn't expected anything as extreme as the hospital stay had been.

"You can prepare yourself for another couple of tests," said Dr. Ruggiero. "There is a standard battery of psychological instruments that we employ for applicants at your level. Well, I'll check back in a while. You can have all the liquids you want now, but I think it's best that we keep you off solid foods at least until morning." The doctor turned to leave.

"How did I do?" asked Justin.

Dr. Ruggiero turned again. "On yesterday's test? We can't tell yet. The tapes take about three days to evaluate. You won't be given the next one until yesterday's has been studied by your Board. If at the end you are granted your job, the data will be put in your file, to which, under the law, you have access." The doctor sighed, and Justin smiled, knowing that even this man, enclosed so deeply within the Federal organization, could be unhappy with the government way. "If your application is rejected, you have the right to petition your Board for an explanation. Of course, it may take the Board a good deal of *time* to process your appeal."

"What happened? I mean, I don't even remember. I thought I'd just have to fill out some forms or take an exam."

The doctor laughed. "No, we don't bother with that. We never knew what they were measuring, if anything. In a few days we'll just feed you another

controlled fantasy situation, lead you into it a bit, and turn you loose. You have no opportunity to cheat, and fluctuations due to changes in temperament or test conditions are kept to a minimum. I suppose that it's better this way." He stood by the side of the bed, lost in his own thoughts for a few seconds. He roused himself with a start. "Well, Mr. Benarcek, have a good afternoon. You know where the call button is? All right, I'll look in later."

THE PHONE RANG while Justin was taking a shower. He slapped the tap buttons angrily and hurried through the dryer screen. He still made wet footprints on the thick white rugs as he crossed the living room to the phone. "Hello," he said.

"Hello, Justin?"

"Yes."

"Hi, this is Bo Staefler. You probably won't remember me, but we were in the same class at Yale. I'm in town and I thought I'd take a chance on calling you up."

"Bo! Of course I remember you! How are you? How have you been?" The damp chill of the living room was forgotten. Justin took the phone to a comfortable chair and sat down.

"Fine," said Staefler. "Look, my wife is with me and I want her to meet you. I've been telling her about you for fifteen years and she can't believe most of it. She's standing out here now, watching the car. Why don't you give me directions, or maybe we could meet you somewhere, whatever's convenient."

The two men talked for a few

minutes more, making arrangements to meet in Justin's favorite downtown pub. After he hung up the phone, Justin finished his shower, shaved, dressed, and ordered a cab. The unit arrived in the street outside Justin's module in less than half an hour, much quicker than he expected. Indeed, the cab's warning buzz startled him from a short nap.

The pub was of the popular standard: dark, decorated in red plush and gloss black, with many polished steel fittings reflecting sun-sparks of light from countless directions. Justin found Staefler and his wife waiting for him, their drinks half finished. Staefler rose from his seat when he saw Justin and, grinning, grabbed his friend's hand.

"Hey, Justin!" he said loudly. "Putting on weight and losing hair, but still the same clown from the radio station, eh?"

Justin smiled. "Married life's done more for your girth, I would say."

"Right," said Staefler. "My wife, Bunny. Bunny, this, of course, is the fabled Justin Benarcek." Staefler and Justin sat down, a signal for the waiter to appear at Justin's elbow. Soon the three were drinking and laughing, as the men spun out story after story of their college days together, only a bit expurgated for the sake of Mrs. Staefler's sensibilities.

It was well past midnight when Justin returned to his apartment module, a bit drunk and filled with a transient glow of fellowship that would fade with a good night's sleep. The evening had been more than pleasant; his law practice and an inner fear of social activity combined to keep Justin alone

in his tiny room for weeks. And, he thought as he slid deeper into the warm trap of sleep, Staefler and his wife provided him with an image of the deeper relationship he denied himself.

Just before noon of the next day his secretary informed him that he had an unscheduled visitor. It was Staefler's wife Bunny, who had been shopping downtown while her husband was attending the textile show for which he had come to the city. Justin was happy to see her; the only woman that he dealt with in his carefully-restricted life was his secretary, Miss Brant, and he never met her socially. In fact, he talked with Bunny Staefler for almost fifteen minutes before she suggested that they go to lunch. Justin would never have thought of it.

"Sure, Bunny. Do you want to go back to Johnny Jack's or try someplace else? We could have a leisurely lunch and meet Bo after his convention. I don't have anything else this afternoon to keep me around here."

"Whatever you like, Justin," she said softly.

Justin flicked a switch on his intercom. "Miss Brant," he said, "make reservations for two at the Shalibet. For about one o'clock. I won't be back this afternoon, and if you get those two briefs typed you can take the rest of the day off."

"Justin," said Mrs. Staefler, "do you think that we have time to run back to the hotel for a minute? I want to drop off these packages. I've been carrying them all over this great city of yours this morning and I'm tired of it. Anyway, if we're going to one of your elite restaurants I want to change out of

these clothes."

"Sure, Bunny," said Justin, holding the door for her. Down on the street they got a cab; as the unit slowly traced a path through the heavy mid-day traffic they chatted quietly. It was almost an hour later when they arrived at the Staefler's hotel.

"Do you want me to wait here in the lobby for you?" asked Justin. "Oh, come on up," said Mrs. Staefler. "It may take me a while to sort through the wardrobe. Anyway, you can help me decide." She smiled, and a quality about her smile startled Justin with a flush of illicit excitement.

Grabbing some clothes from the closet, Mrs. Staefler hurried into the bathroom. Justin went to the window and stared down at the thickly choked street. He felt mildly and pleasantly confused, as though unfamiliar emotions were competing just beneath his consciousness. Bunny Staefler was humming as she selected her costume. Justin heard the snap of the light switch, and the racket of the fan in the bathroom died. He turned to appraise her choice of clothing.

"Come here for a moment, won't you?" she said nervously, sitting on the edge of the bed, smoothing the low ripples of the bedspread.

Justin felt another rush of excitement, but said nothing. He sat next to her and waited.

"I want to talk with you, but I don't know if I can get this all out without embarrassing both of us." Justin looked at her, but she stared at her hands, still playing uneasily with the quilted cover. "I don't want you to think any of the usual things. I mean,

that I don't love Bo or anything. Because I do. But I . . . I don't know, I need something."

Justin sighed and looked past her, distractedly staring at a cheap, lurid print on the wall of the hotel room. He knew what she needed, or what she thought she needed. But these situations were always so impossible.

Mrs. Staefler guessed what he was thinking. "It wouldn't be as if we were getting into anything huge, anything that we couldn't handle. We're going home day after tomorrow. We won't see each other again for years, probably. But I just want someone close."

All Justin could think about was how he felt when he had learned about Suzy's affairs. He frowned, unconsciously moving away from the lovely woman next to him. He stood, and she wouldn't look up at him. He heard her crying softly. He walked toward the door.

"Thank you," she said, sobbing. "But I think you ought to lie down and get some sleep."

"What?" asked Justin, astonished.

"I said that you ought to try and sleep."

"Yes," he said dreamily. "I'd like that now."

"GOOD AFTERNOON, Mr. Benarcek." Dr. Ruggiero stood beside the hospital bed, his hand clasping Justin's wrist while he measured the pulse rate.

"Am I here?" Justin remembered nothing about the Recovery room this time. He had already been returned to his ward, but he was still very, very drugged.

The doctor laughed. "Yes. Pretty sleepy, eh? Well, I'll leave you in a minute. You had a difficult test this time. Your mind put up a tough defense. We had a lot of trouble imposing the fantasy on you. I have a feeling you're going to want to just rest for a while."

"I hope it's worth it," said Justin. His mouth felt strange, tingling as though it had been anaesthetized, and he had trouble forming his words.

Dr. Ruggiero said nothing for a few seconds. "I don't know, Mr. Benarcek," he said. "Of course, I don't have any say in the matter, and the Federal knows what it's doing." He paused, and smiled ironically. "Anyway, it *tells* us that it knows what it's doing. And they decided this is the best way to eliminate the misfits. But I don't know. That test was pretty hard on you."

Even heavily sedated, Justin realized that the doctor was saying dangerous things. He hoped for both their sakes that no one was listening.

"It's all right," said Justin. "I signed the release form."

"No," said the doctor, "I don't mean just that. There ought to be a better way. This sort of thing used to be immoral." Dr. Ruggiero fell silent again, his expression indicating that he had finally gone too far, that he had said aloud the potentially fatal ideas that had been smoldering within him. He dropped Justin's hand suddenly. "I'll look in on you before I go off duty," he said, and turned and hurried from the ward.

A FEW DAYS LATER they came for

Justin again. They scooped him out of his bed and onto a cart. They fastened the straps around him and covered him with a stiff, clean sheet. An orderly injected him with a sedative, and before they had wheeled him to the testing laboratory he was already only semi-conscious.

It seemed to Justin that he was once again a lawyer, and that Bo Staefler called him after a fifteen-year silence. They spent a pleasant afternoon together, enjoying an expensive meal and the company of two beautiful, costly women. He and Bo had gotten drunk, just like in their long-dead college days, and had somehow managed to find their way back to Bo's hotel, where they had collapsed in an inebriated coma.

Justin awoke feeling sick the next morning, and Bo consoled him by reminding him that it was Wednesday morning, and that Justin didn't have to go to work. Justin was horrified; he had never missed a morning worship since he had become a Professional man. The temple would know that he was not there, and the agents of Thomas and Charles, the Federal Services leaders, would want an explanation. For a citizen of his prominence there was no explanation. The Federal was a powerful force, an authority that could not be duped or offended. And it was a jealous body.

Bo laughed at Justin's fear. He tried to explain that missing one devotion in fifteen years was surely not so grave a sin. But Justin knew better. He had seen what had happened to certain of his associates who had thought that very thing. Bo was a small Mercantilist

from a small town. The tireless eyes of Thomas and Charles were not so acutely trained on him. But Justin could not afford a lapse.

Bo became angry. He had not completely shaken off the liquor of the night before, and already had downed a good quantity of a synthetic whiskey provided by the hotel's management. He staggered a little as he walked to Justin. He grasped Justin's shoulder and tried unsuccessfully to look steadily into Justin's eyes. "Go on," said Staefler. "Run to your silly thing. Least I'll find out what kind of friend you are. Haven't seen you in fifteen years, and you'd rather spend the time kneeling in the dark. You moron."

Justin was angry, but his anxiety didn't allow him time to answer his friend. He realized that he may be insulting Staefler by leaving, and that he might irreparably damage their relationship, but he made his decision. He picked his coat up from the floor and went to the door.

"Wait a minute," said Staefler from behind him. "You have time to get some rest, don't you? I think that you ought to sack out for a while."

JUSTIN FELT amazingly well. He was getting used to the process, perhaps, and did not fight the doctors as much as they imposed their strange and painful ministrations. He still felt the effects of the anaesthetic when he was returned to the ward, but to a lesser degree than in the previous rounds. Dr. Ruggiero was waiting for him when they wheeled Justin to his bed.

"You ought to be a little less foggy this time," said the doctor. "It was a

very short episode. You reacted much more strongly, for some reason. I'm sure your religious training has been more strict than usual."

"Then I did all right?" asked Justin, for the first time in the long procedure feeling a hint of confidence.

"As I explained, I don't have the training or the authority to make any evaluations. But the psych techs brought you out of it in less than thirty minutes. That usually works to your advantage, unless, of course, you reacted quickly in the wrong direction." Justin looked startled, but his sudden fear was dissolved by Dr. Ruggiero's confident smile.

"I'm glad it's over," said Justin, rubbing his itching eyes.

"I suppose you are. It's an awfully hard thing to go through. Too hard, perhaps."

Justin was afraid of the man. Here he was, starting that same treasonous line of conversation. "I know I don't particularly want to do it again, but I'm sure it does what it's supposed to."

"There are other ways. Besides the pain and physical discomforts it causes you, don't you think it's unnecessary to force people to have encounters that their natural behavior would never allow? If you knew that there were other testing apparatus available, would you still do this?"

Justin looked around the ward. There were no other nurses or doctors around to overhear, and the other patients were either out at their own tests or asleep. But surely there was monitoring equipment. Justin agreed with what the doctor felt, but he was naturally hesitant to say anything.

"Here," said Dr. Ruggiero, dropping a slip of paper on the bed. "We've been around for a little while, now. When you get out, come by and see us. If you get your job we could have a little celebration." The doctor smiled wryly and left Justin alone.

The paper was folded in half, casually lying on the sheet for all to see. Justin picked it up before anyone might come into the ward. It said, "The League," with an address in the ghetto. Beneath that it said "Wed., 10 P.M." Justin understood immediately. Here was a secret organization, probably with revolutionary aims. He had never known; no one had ever heard of its existence. The doctor had said they had been around for some time . . .

If the paper were found by the agents of Thomas and Charles it would be disastrous. Apparently Dr. Ruggiero knew more intimate things about Justin than he had admitted. The doctor had some reason to trust him. Justin carefully studied the address, tore the paper into quarters, and swallowed them.

JUSTIN AWOKE on a narrow bed in a dim, cold room. His right arm was raised up on a shelf and he was being fed intravenously. A single light bulb on the ceiling flickered, making shadows jump crazily before Justin's dazed eyes. His body was aching and his head throbbed. He called out, but it was a long time before anyone responded.

A young orderly came into the cell, dressed in a soiled white coat. He stood at the side of the cot and looked down at Justin. Then he stopped the drip of

the IV bottle and removed the needle from Justin's arm.

"What is this?" asked Justin groggily.

"You've just had your test. You remember. You wanted a Federal job. You've been under for a couple of days, so you ought to be a little out of it right now."

"I know. I remember that all right. I had three tests. Almost two weeks. Where's Dr. Ruggiero?"

"One test. There's only one test," said the orderly, rather bored. "Don't know any Dr. Ruggiero. Probably part of the fantasy."

"No," said Justin, his mouth suddenly dry, his blood rushing loudly in his ears, "he was there *between* the tests."

"Nope. You didn't have those tests. You just thought you did. We only give one test. Hell, they're expensive. You didn't do so well, you know."

Justin didn't understand, and he didn't realize the meaning of what the young man said. "It was *real*," he said.

The orderly just laughed and prepared a hypodermic injection. "Is this real?" asked Justin, just beginning to panic.

"Sometimes, once they've gone through this they can never be sure," said the orderly. He didn't bother to swab Justin's arm with alcohol before he gave him the injection. "But if you ever wake up from this, you'll know." In less than a minute Justin closed his eyes, despite all his fear and all his fighting, and he stopped thinking.

—GEO. ALEC EFFINGER

JOE HALDEMAN

Joe Haldeman has established an enviable reputation for himself in the last few years as an author of "hard-science" sf. (He is also the younger brother of Jack C. Haldeman II, whose "Watchdog" appeared here last May.) In the story which follows, he takes a fresh look at an old idea—mining the asteroids—and tells the tale of—

TWO MEN AND A ROCK

Illustrated by BILLY GRAHAM

SIXTEEN sappers in our outfit, including me. The Company computer paired us up, two for each project, and out of fifteen possibles, I had to draw Warren Brooks. Or "Thumbs," as we called him, without too much affection.

Being a sapper, a deep-space demolition man, calls for a combination of not-too-demanding skills and a large dollop of luck, extraordinary luck. If you want to be a sapper more than once, anyhow.

Thumbs had the luck. He probably had enough luck for the whole outfit. That was the only way he could have stayed alive long enough to make D-5. I was a D-6 then, and the idea of riding herd over Thumbs. . . well, let's say I'd have felt a lot safer picking some random secretary out of the office pool. Because Thumbs didn't share his luck with his partners.

It makes no black mark on your record to have your partner die on a job; that sort of thing just happens too often. But Thumbs had come back

alone twice as often as the worst of the rest of us. That didn't make any difference to the Company computer. No shortage of warm bodies: there were a thousand men Earthside waiting for each one of our sixteen slots. It pays well. And it's space.

We were resting—if you can call it that—in the high-gravity gymnasium after a stiff workout, mandatory calisthenics. Thumbs and I were alone, probably for the last time before we'd go out together. I figured this would be as good a time as any to get it out in the open.

"Thumbs," I said, "there's something that we've got to get—"

"I know," he said. "You're coming back whether I do or not, so I better do everything by the book and not take any unnecessary—"

"Yeah. That kind of thing." I got up—creaking—off the lounge chair and crossed to the coffee machine.

"You want coffee?" He didn't. I drew myself a cup and crossed over to

sit on his lounge. Just being friendly.

"It's luck," he said, "just bad luck. But I've told you that before."

"Yep." I sipped the coffee. Same old bat's-blood flavor. "But the bad luck always seems to wind up with the other fellow. *I'm* the other fellow now."

"Damn it!" He sat up faster than I would have thought he could, in gravity. "I know enough, I'm good enough, to—"

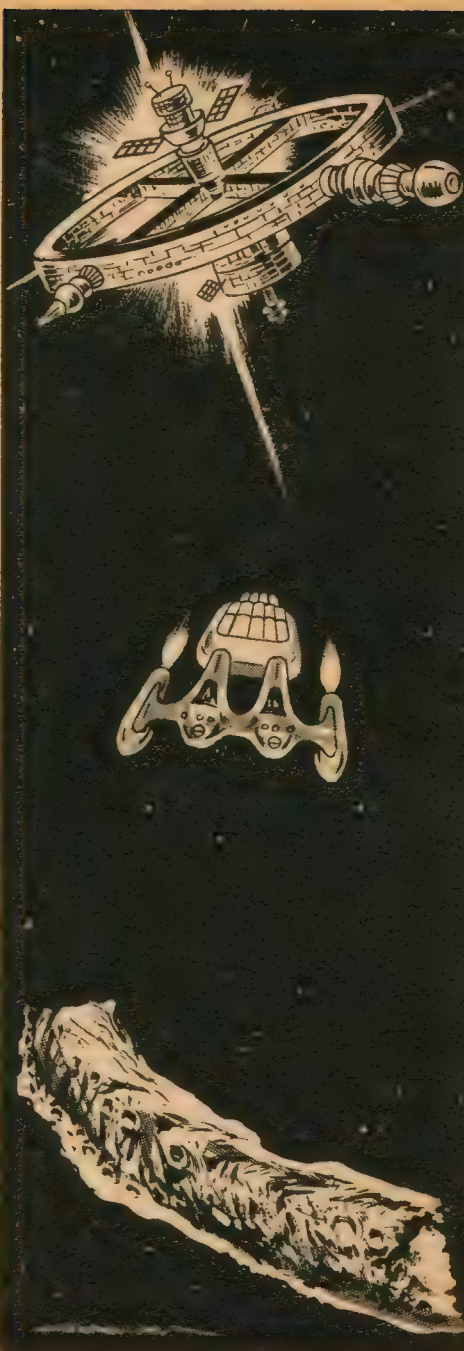
"Calm down; I know, calm down. I didn't say you didn't know your job." The hell I didn't. "But look, like *you* said. . . just for my peace of mind. . . do it by the book. Careful all the way. We'll have to make two trips for this one. So careful, ultra—careful."

That was the important thing, care. Not just for safety, but so that the whole jury-rigged process would work at all. You set the charges in the rock, the ore-bearing asteroid, in just the right places and set them off at just the right time. Because fuel costs an awful lot and it's an expensive proposition if those recovery ships blast out there and wait, and then wind up coming home empty because the charges were lopsided or went off too soon or too late.

And it's no secret that the Company would rather lose a man than a rock.

"You're the boss." He got up off the couch and started buttoning on his tunic. Then he said in a low voice: "There's nothing wrong with me. Nothing. Just bad luck." I watched him hobble out. Tried to convince myself that he was right.

RARE EARTHS are those elements with the funny names like erbium and ytterbium and dysprosium; they al-



ways look misspelled. And they *are* rare, on Earth. But some asteroids are practically made of them, and they're worth a lot more than their weight in gold. That's what keeps the Company in business, and keeps the sixteen of us in space.

Some of the rare-earth rocks are a kilometer or more through the middle, and even the smallest is too big for a spaceship to drag around. So you've got to cut them up. The only way you can do it is with explosives. You set "shaped" charges all around the asteroid and blow them all at once, which splinters the thing into manageable chunks. But it also sends the chunks every which way, moving pretty fast.

The only practical way to retrieve the pieces is to use the computer to predict which way they're going to fly, which it does pretty accurately. Then, before you blow the charges, recovery ships go out with their pressor nets and prepare to pick up the pieces as they fly by.

It's quite a bit more difficult than, say, catching a ball someone throws toward you (not *to* you) after you've jumped off a high-diving board. To get a better picture, figure he's throwing a fist-sized diamond. And you only have one chance at it.

Asteroids in this part of the belt have an orbital speed of about 20 kilometers a second. So if your charges go off a tenth of a second too soon (or late, but that rarely happens), the recovery ships are going to miss their treasure by at least two kilometers. Half a kilometer is too far.

It'd be tricky enough, even without the danger. But you're working with pre-set explosives—time bombs—that

sometimes act unpredictably in the hard cold and vacuum of space. Something like one out of a hundred will go off early or late or not at all. You've got to haul a bunch of them out to the asteroid, set them up exactly where they're supposed to be, and get away before one of them decides to sneeze. Each bomb is a small nuke, and if one of them goes, all of them do.

I HAD ANOTHER CUP of their so-called coffee and went up to the half-grav area for chow. Everybody else was there already: fifteen sappers, four prospectors, seven pilots, and the office pool; a communications/supply officer, the captain, and three secretaries. Two of the pilots and all of the secretaries were female. One out of six isn't too bad, not for space, but the girls usually won't give a sapper the time of day. They think we're a rough crowd.

I got my tray and sat down with two other sappers, Stash and Scithers.

"Gmph, Waldo," Stash mumbled around a mouthful of plastic potatoes.

"Same to you."

Scithers looked up. "Ah, Waldo. . . I hear fortune smiled on you today."

"Why don't you go play outside?" Somehow I'd almost managed to forget about Thumbs. I chewed for a while on a piece of leather that tasted surprisingly like beef. Surprising, anyhow, when you consider that it had never been within three hundred million miles of a cow. Straight from the hydroponics tank. Yes, the Company is very proud of the tight closed ecology they run here at Belt Station Three. About all they have to send us from Earth are explosives, fuel and replace-

ments. Mostly sapper replacements.

"Hell, no use worryin' about it," Stash said. "I went out with Thumbs a few weeks ago. He did all right."

I wasn't impressed. "Sure. That was a damn milk run—just chip off some surface veins. How many charges you take?"

"Only six," he admitted.

"All right, We've got a real father out there tomorrow. Cylindrical and rotating about the short axis. The vein runs straight through the middle. The computer says it'll take seventeen—seventeen!—nukes to crack it."

"Seventeen? That's, uh. . ." Scithers shook his head. I wasn't so hungry any more.

"Yeah. Figure at least eight hours if everything goes just right. No way we can make it in one trip."

They didn't say anything. Leaving those bombs out there in the cold, while you and your partner went back for life support; that was asking for trouble. No matter who your partner was. But the Company said it couldn't afford a portable Life Support Unit to go out with you on the scooter. After all, the scooters had to be replaced every month or so. Cheerful argument. So you carried about six hours' worth of oxy and water on your back.

I splurged and bought a drink after chow—the Company ships up a couple of bottles every month and sells it to you, one drink at a time, for approximately a thousand times what it would cost on Earth. They claim that they aren't making any profit, and maybe they aren't. Nobody but the captain and the sappers can afford to buy a drink every now and then.

Usually you buy one the night before a project, even knowing you'll want one twice as badly when you come back. But if you don't come back. . . what's a couple of grand?

THE NEXT MORNING, a few hours before we were due to launch, Thumbs and I went up to the Administration area to get our updated orders. Sally was programmer for the project, which was the only good thing about it.

She was peering into a microfiche scanner when we walked in. She didn't look up, too easy to lose your place, but said, "Make yourselves comfortable, boys. I'll be through in a minute." You couldn't help but love Sally, even if she wasn't as pretty as a couple of the others. She made you feel like a person instead of a grubby sapper.

Thumbs got some coffee, but this time I didn't want any. Figured on getting a little nap before launch time. There was a carefully preserved *New York Times*-fax that somebody had smuggled up. It was four months old and I'd read it through twice already. I started to read it again.

"All right, boys," she said. "Gather 'round." First she showed us the astrographic charts that showed where the asteroid (its name was "Bertha") would be at launch time. I paid attention more out of politeness than anything else; the prospectors had already planted a radio beacon on the rock, and all we had to do was set the scooter's controls on automatic. Same for coming back. Easiest part of the project.

Then she brought out the photomaps of the asteroid itself.

"I guess you guys know this is the biggest job since we cracked Ella last year. Waldo, you have to figure out what sequence you think would be best in setting the charges."

"Well, with seventeen. . . I think the best deal would be to set five or six of the hardest, then come back for life support, then set the rest."

She nodded. "That makes sense. That's how they did Ella. . . well, you were on Ella, weren't you, Waldo?"

"Ella?" Ella, Bertha, who remembers the names? It's always "the rock" while you're working on it. "Oh, the big one. Yeah, I was on it."

"That's probably why they chose you to head up this one."

"Probably." But why Thumbs?

"Of course, the hardest ones will be the ones farthest from the center of mass. You'll probably want to crawl up there first."

"Right." I studied the photographs. Bertha looks like what would happen if you tried to sculpt a model of a frankfurter out of some kind of light rock, and gave up halfway. It's about six times as long as it is wide, and turning end over end, the axis somewhere near the middle.

That produces difficulties. The gravity of an asteroid isn't worth mentioning, but a spinning cylindrical one produces "artificial gravity" the same way the Belt Station does: centrifugal force. Actually, it's not a "force" at all, but just the way you feel the fact that the asteroid is trying to roll away from you, while you're hanging on for dear life.

Going from the center of Bertha to either end would be like climbing down

a mountain. The "gravity" is always pulling you away from the center, and it gets stronger, the farther you move toward either end.

The feet and left hand of the space-suit you use for this kind of job are power-assisted claws that bite into the rock. You also have a tether harpoon, so if your feet and hand give way (happens pretty often when you work with soft stuff), you won't go spinning off toward Jupiter and points beyond.

So you crawl "downhill" and plant the bomb, then climb back up to the center (which is where you parked the scooter). That's pretty much like climbing a mountain—at least you go down-ish if you fall off—but it gets easier, the closer you get to the middle.

The prospectors had splashed bright yellow fluorescent paint on the seventeen bomb sites. All we had to do was carry the right bomb to the right place and fasten it to the rock. Figured I'd plant ten and let Thumbs take care of the seven easiest. No, let him do one hard one, on the first trip out.

I turned the photographs around in my hands, getting used to seeing Bertha in any position. There wasn't a single position that made it look good, though.

"How much time do we have?"

"Well, let me see." She ran a slender finger down a column of figures. "The charges are set to go off at 1739 tonight. Gives you a little more than twelve hours."

I figured eight hours' working time. It's about fifteen minutes from here to Bertha; four trips, that's another hour. Figure an hour's worth of suiting up and, later, recharging.

"Guess I'll get a couple of hours' sleep. You better, too, Thumbs."

"Hell, I don't think I can sleep. Too..."

"Suit yourself." I shrugged. "Meet me at the scooter room at 0730. I'm going up there and find me a hammock."

They don't like you to spend too much time sleeping in the zero-grav areas. After a while, your body starts to adjust to the lack of weight—eventually, your bones would break like dry sticks at the slightest exertion and your muscles would be mush. But a few hours every now and then doesn't hurt. And once you get used to it—stop having nightmares about falling—it's the greatest sleep you've ever had.

I took our orders and headed "upstairs" to the hub, where the scooter room was. Stripped down and laced myself into the nearest hammock. I scanned the orders carefully 3½ times before I fell asleep.

I'D SET the chime for 0730, and expected Thumbs to be there when I woke up. At first I thought he wasn't, but then I recognized his lumpy body in one of the other hammocks. That was good, he'd be rested up. I was swimming over to wake him up when his chime went off.

"Ready?" I asked. He was sleepily trying to untangle himself from the hammock.

"I guess... sure."

When he got loose, we swam up to the suit area. Took about twenty minutes for them to get us buckled in and check out all the feedback circuits. Then another ten minutes for life sup-

port charges and check-out.

Suited up, we cycled through the airlock into node A, where the scooter was parked. The bombs were already loaded, as I'd ordered, numbers 17, 16, 15, 14, 1 and 2. The hardest first.

Thumbs and I squeezed into the narrow bench up front and strapped ourselves in. When he was ready, I undid the line that held us to the loading platform of node A, and we each grabbed hold of the dock and pushed for all we were worth. Slowly, the two-ton scooter with its ton of bombs slid away from the dock. Couldn't fire the jets, of course, until we were well away from the Station.

As always, I looked back as we cleared the node exit. And as always, I felt a chill of wonder. We were on the shadow side, so the station was a huge dim white wheel that at first took up all of the sky and slowly, slowly fell back, hard bright stars crowding in on it until the sun burst out from behind and the automatic filters shut out the starlight.

I turned around and the stars came back out. Brightest by far was Jupiter, a tiny fire-yellow disc. The stars had color, too, of course: I recognized red Antares and golden Alpha Centaurus and the blue jewel of Vega; all of them standing garishly in front of the pale blue billow of the Galaxy, the Milky Way. And for a minute I could forget that I was riding a nuclear time bomb out to a spinning mountain with a man called Thumbs. I could even feel a little sympathy toward Thumbs. After all, he was one of us: fools who would rather die breathing space than never see the stars.

"Hold on." I flipped the toggle

switch that locked us into the guidance computer. Four short bursts from the steering jets and then the workhorse kicked in. Two gravs for ten seconds.

The Station and its retinue of six recovery ships slipped away behind us. Straight ahead, it was easy to pick out Bertha. The asteroid looked like a star about the color and brightness of Arcturus, and it was the only star around that was twinkling. Well, not "twinkling", actually. It went bright. ... dim. ... bright. ... dim as it tumbled.

About fifteen minutes later, just when you could start to make out the shape of the asteroid, the steering jets fired twice again, as we turned around to brake. The workhorse blasted again, not quite as long this time. The green MANUAL light flickered on.

I worked the steering jets to where we were facing the asteroid again. It was still a couple of kilometers away; looked about the size of your little finger. It was growing very slowly.

It's funny how hard it is to judge size and distance in space. There was no way to tell that Bertha was half a kilometer long, so it looked just like a harmless little rock you could reach out and touch. Some part of your mind gets used to thinking of it that way, and you can't help but get disoriented and a little gut-scared when you get really close and the thing just gets bigger and bigger.

Some time ago I learned that the trick was to look for rocks and little craters and cracks on the surface of the asteroid. It keeps your mind busy and keeps reminding you that the thing is actually a little planet.

I looked for the red X that the pros-

pectors had painted at the center of mass. I guess we were about a hundred meters from Bertha when I saw it. It took a combination of long side bursts to get us headed there and I started slowly braking as we approached. I kept telling myself as the asteroid loomed closer—stretching out to the right and left until it blotted out the sky—I kept telling myself that there was no danger, we weren't anything like close enough to hit—but, as usual, I overcorrected and we wound up drifting back away from the X.

I brought us back in with little bumps from the side jets. When we seemed close enough to the X, I rolled the scooter around so the top was facing Bertha, and fired the anchor. Turned out we were only about three meters from the surface; the X was smaller than I'd thought. The harpoon sank fast into the rock and I reeled in excess cable until the line was taut.

Thumbs took bombs 2 and 1 and put them into the holders on each arm of his suit. I took 16 and 17, the two most distant. We gathered up our maps and stepped out, shinnying down the cable.

It can give a new guy vertigo, crawling down that line towards a slow-spinning mountain. But of course you can't fall—if you let go, you'll just stay in the same place.

Thumbs didn't hesitate, falling out, and went down the cable like an old hand. I had to keep reminding myself that he was an old hand; you need at least twenty missions to make D-5.

He set off toward the "north" to plant 1 and 2, while I went "south" for 16 and 17. The going was pretty easy the first twenty or so meters. Just

crunch you fingers and toes into the ground and climb. Then, when I started feeling the tug of centrifugal force, I put a charge in my harpoon and threw it out. The trick is to throw it slightly "up", straight down the axis of the asteroid and slightly rising. Then, when it reaches the end of its tether, it swings out perpendicular to the tether and the charge drives it into the ground. Get a little dizzy watching it, though. Bertha goes around once every four minutes, which makes the sky wheel around just fast enough to keep you disoriented; falling.

It took me about ten minutes to crawl the length of the tether and then an equal distance beyond, where I pushed the button on my end that released the harpoon and reeled it in. Then I tossed it again and kept inching my way up. Kept checking the time—it was 42 minutes to the first site.

It's not all that difficult to plant the nuke, once you get there. You just set it on the yellow splotch and secure the mounting plate, having turned it around until the light on top blinks on, indicating you have the right angle with respect to the asteroid's center of mass. You mash down a button and a set of cleats like the ones on your suit bite into the rock.

I didn't run into any trouble until after I'd planted the most distant bomb, number seventeen. It was almost on the very top, where I was fighting two gravities' worth of that fictitious force. I planted it and retrieved my harpoon and s-l-o-w-l-y turned around, facing "uphill" now. I fired the harpoon and watched it drift up, come taut and shoot to the ground and, as some-

times happens, the shock of the harpoon hitting the surface dislodged my hand and feet. I was falling.

Now anybody can tell you, even people it's never happened to; the most important thing when you fall off is not to lose your head. The more emphatically someone gives you this advice, the less likely it is that it's ever happened to him.

The asteroid fell away from me at a dizzying speed and I had about three-quarters of a second to idly wonder whether the line was going to hold. It did, and I started to haul it in hand-over-hand as fast as I could. That wasn't actually in order to get closer to the rock. "Falling off" doesn't mean that you keep falling; not as long as the tether holds. You oscillate and eventually trail behind the rock, and then swing up to it again. And you'll hit with the same force no matter how much line you reel in—conservation of angular momentum, remember? You've got to reel in though, so you can let loose a moment before you hit: if the line isn't slack when you hit the rock, the shock can jar the harpoon loose. Then you're off again, but this time like a rock thrown from a sling.

I was in communication with Thumbs through the whole thing, and the exchange sounded something like this:

"God-damn!"

"What? What's happening?"

"I'm off."

"Well, *reel in!*"

"I—am. Fast. . . as I can."

(silence)

"Here it comes. —oof!"

"You ahold?"

"Yeah—no—yes." Didn't have a good grip at first with my hand and one foot; started to drift off but managed to grab hold again.

Falling off isn't that great a danger—no danger, in theory, with suit beacons—and we've only lost six men that way. Always in pairs, of course; the only way you can get into trouble is if both of you are off and they have to get together a rescue team back at Belt Station. That can take more time than you have to spare.

We have the little shooters, liquid nitrogen jets, that you can use to maneuver—clumsily—near the Station. But you can't do anything complicated with them, like catch up with a rotating system. Besides, the Company docks your pay every time you use them: elements lost from the ecosphere.

"You at the C.M. now?" I asked.

"Right."

"Well, it'll take me about ten minutes to get there. Save time if you climb up and get those last two."

"Okay."

Thumbs got them and came back down and met me halfway. I planted 15 and he did 14. We crawled back to the scooter and returned to the station.

I tried to act friendly with Thumbs while they were refilling our water and air. It didn't work.

"Don't be so nervous, man," he said. "We've got all the hard ones. Not much chance for me to—"

"Knock it off, Thumbs. I trust you." About *that* much and no more.

We loaded up bombs 3 through 13 and went back. Most of the eleven were clustered around the C.M., so we didn't expect any real trouble.

I made a real sloppy approach to Bertha—I was nervous in spite of Thumbs' reassurance—but eventually we got anchored down and got to work.

A couple of years ago, sappers didn't have to worry about time so much. They'd set the charges and go back to the station and wait until the recovery ships were in position, then detonate them by radio. But twice they went off early, (probably some kind of solar radiation) and that was the end of that. Company lost two rocks. Oh yes, and four sappers. If a sapper makes a mistake now, the pieces of rock usually go where they're supposed to anyway.

The main danger is not really from the nukes. They're "shaped" charges; they only blow in one direction. So if you're a couple of clicks away when one goes, and it isn't pointed right at you, you're safe. The gravel is what gets you.

When the rock goes up, it breaks into a half-dozen big pieces that go rolling off to the recovery ships at a pretty good pace. But there are millions of other chunks from the size of an aircar to the size of a pea. They go every which way at a very high speed, and will go right through a suited man without slowing down. The only safe place to be is back at the station, behind a strong pressor field. They turn it on just after detonation and let it run for one second. In that one second it uses more power than all the station does in a whole day's normal operation. But it'll turn away a house-sized chunk.

We would have finished well ahead of schedule, but the clamps on 6 were defective and it sailed off right after Thumbs had set it into the rock. We had to go after it in the scooter, bring it

back and use auxilliary clamps to hold it in place. That took an extra hour; it was 1540 before I started out with 7 and 10. A little less than two hours to go.

Thumbs took 8 and 9 and we headed "north" together. "Waldo, I'm sorry about the delay on number 6," he said. "But you've got to admit—"

"Damn it, Thumbs, don't get all defensive. Forget it. Just luck, you didn't do anything wrong."

"Yeah." That was just it.

We planted those four without any incident, taking about a half-hour, and came back for the three remaining. Number 13 was pretty far away, so I took it and let Thumbs handle the rest.

While I was planting the bomb, back at the station the recovery ships flared and slid away to get in position. That meant one hour to go.

Every time you go "up" a rock, you try to take a slightly different track. If you try to take hold someplace where your claws have already bitten, you're likely to just get a handful of gravel. I guess that's what happened.

We had finished up and both of us were headed back. Thumbs was about halfway from me to the C.M. I pulled out my harpoon and recharged it, but as I leaned back to throw it, I just kept going. I looked down and there was nothing but space below my feet.

I shouted something and, turning end over end, saw Thumbs look up. He watched me for about a second and then, incredibly, jumped.

As I said, he's a pro, no matter how unlucky. I'm not sure I would have tried a trick like that: swinging up on his tether to intercept me as I flew past.

It worked, after a fashion.

I heard the *clank* when he grabbed my foot-claw and, looking down, I could just barely see him. But I could see behind his back, all the way down to the rock, and I saw his tether snap taut and the harpoon jerk free and we were both tumbling away. Fast.

Maybe it was a death sentence, but a sapper doesn't think that way. Both of us were unfastening the nitrogen shooters on our belts when Sally's voice came over the suit radios. First time I ever heard Control breaking in—normally they just monitor the sappers' conversation—but I guess you could say this was a special occasion.

"Sapper team, this is control. What's going on out there?"

"Sally, this is Waldo. I'm afraid we're both off the rock." I could hear her gasp. "We're about to use the shooters."

"That's good," she said without conviction. There really isn't enough juice in one of them to cancel out your speed relative to the asteroid, get you back to it and still have enough to maneuver your way to the scooter.

"Wait," Thumbs said. "Give me your shooter."

"What?"

"Right. Give it to me. I'm lighter than you are, so it'll go farther. Maybe with two of them I can—"

"Right! Here." I passed it down.

"What's happening?" Sally asked.

"Thumbs is taking both of the shooters. We think he can get back to the scooter that way."

"And come back to pick up Waldo," Thumbs said.

"Do you think it'll . . . ?" she caught

herself. "I'm sure it'll work. That's, uh, wonderful."

The rock was getting small now; you could cover it with your hand. We hurried. In space, of course, you don't have to use any more fuel to go a mile than you use to go a foot. But it takes time to cover distance, and time we didn't have. It was 1650; forty-nine minutes to detonation.

The liquid nitrogen from the shooter sprayed out in a pale blue cloud-trail that dissipated immediately. Thumbs slipped away slowly at first, then faster; then all I could see was the cloud, and eventually not even that. The asteroid went from a squashed pebble to a sliver to a slowly twinkling star.

Thumbs kept in touch by radio. 1659: "I'm definitely getting closer."

1701: "Ran out of juice. Switching."

1705: "Closer."

1708: "Coasting now, save fuel."

1716: "Getting close enough to start. . . braking—there. Don't think I can..."

1720: "Missed it. Going back."

1722: "Just about . . . there. Okay, Waldo, where are you? Have your beacon on?"

My beacon, a strong blue light, was on but I was too far away. Just looked like another star. "Don't be a hero, Thumbs. Takes almost fifteen minutes to get to the station. Get going."

"Look, I've got a plan. *Where are you?*"

"Go. That's an order." He told me where to put my order.

"Just give me some idea of where you are. We can both make it."

Hell, I'm no hero either. "From where I am, Bertha's just about five degrees from Polaris. So just head

toward Crux and you'll come close enough to spot me."

About 1730, he drifted by close enough to throw me a line. I hauled myself in. "So what's this plan?" I was sure we were dead but that Thumbs'd rather die in some half-baked rescue attempt than come home alone again.

"It's simple. We use the scooter as a shield."

"Hey, that's great. Really great. *You idiot!* I ought to use *you* as a shield." The scooter was nothing but an open framework of light metal beams, with two little fuel tanks . . .

"Wait," I said. I see what you mean. The tanks—"

"Right. We dump the fuel and line up the tanks between us and the rock. Anything is going to get to us, it has to go through all that insulation and four layers of metal."

"Well, let's not just talk about it. Let's do it." We dumped the hydrogen and then waited a minute and let the oxy out. This left the machine slowly spinning. We corrected with the attitudinal jets (liquid nitrogen, like the shooters) and lined the scooter up so that both fuel tanks were in a line with Bertha. We got out of the control seats and floated behind the tanks. It was 1737.

"Good luck, boys," Sally said. We needed just enough luck to keep anything bigger than a pebble away from us.

Hidden, we didn't see the flash of the explosion, and of course there was no shock wave. But we *heard* it, which is an odd thing in space, since we were holding on to the fuel tank when a chunk struck it. The tank rang like a

cathedral bell and the vibration passed through the metal into our suits. It was deafening.

We gave Sally our approximate position and she sent the other scooter out to find us. While we were waiting, we looked at the damage. There were two pieces aimed at us, one a little one that just put a dent in the tank. The other made a hole too small to put your little finger through, but it went all the way through the hydrogen tank and the front of the oxygen tank, finally running out of steam inside the oxygen tank. One of the nitrogen tanks was holed and the top of the driver's seat was sheared off. Lots of stuff flying around.

Back at the station, I did the almost

unthinkable, and bought Thumbs a drink. He was so astonished by this extravagant gesture that he turned around and bought me one.

After hearing about the rescue, all but a few of the sappers changed their minds about Thumbs. The holdouts I went to work on one by one, and in the process of debate lost two teeth and got a split lip and three black eyes (not at the same time).

It didn't improve my appearance any, but what the hell. Sally's going to leave with Thumbs when his tour's over and, as I say, none of the other girls will have anything to do with a sapper, even if he has all his teeth. They think we're a rough crowd.

—JOE HALDEMAN

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	I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.		Sol Cohen, Publisher

AGONY IN THE GARDEN

Thomas Monteleone made his debut here in our November, 1972 issue with several reviews for to The Future in Books, a department to which he will continue to contribute. The story which follows is his first to be published professionally, and in it he deals with the death of an archetype. . .

THOMAS MONTELEONE

Illustrated by MIKE KALUTA

JESUS CHRIST PUSHED his way out of the crowd. He stepped onto an escalator and descended to the lower level of Metro station. He could hear the hum of the subway as the staircase started to move. When he reached the bottom, a man was standing in front of him, blocking his path.

"Fool!" yelled Christ, even though he knew the man couldn't hear him. "Get out of my way!"

The man continued to stand in the way, smoking a cigarette. Christ raised his arm and jammed the point of his elbow into the back of the man's neck. The man seemed to move in slow-motion as he careened forward, arms outstretched, his face expressionless. He hit the concrete head first, the rough surface scraping away his skin.

Damn you, thought Christ. Then looking out at the crowd: *You all deserve the same thing.*

He stepped over the fallen man; but

before he could walk away, the man had gotten up, and resumed smoking his cigarette as if nothing had happened.

Nothing had.

Always the same, thought Christ. *They've forgotten everything. Wasting my time.*

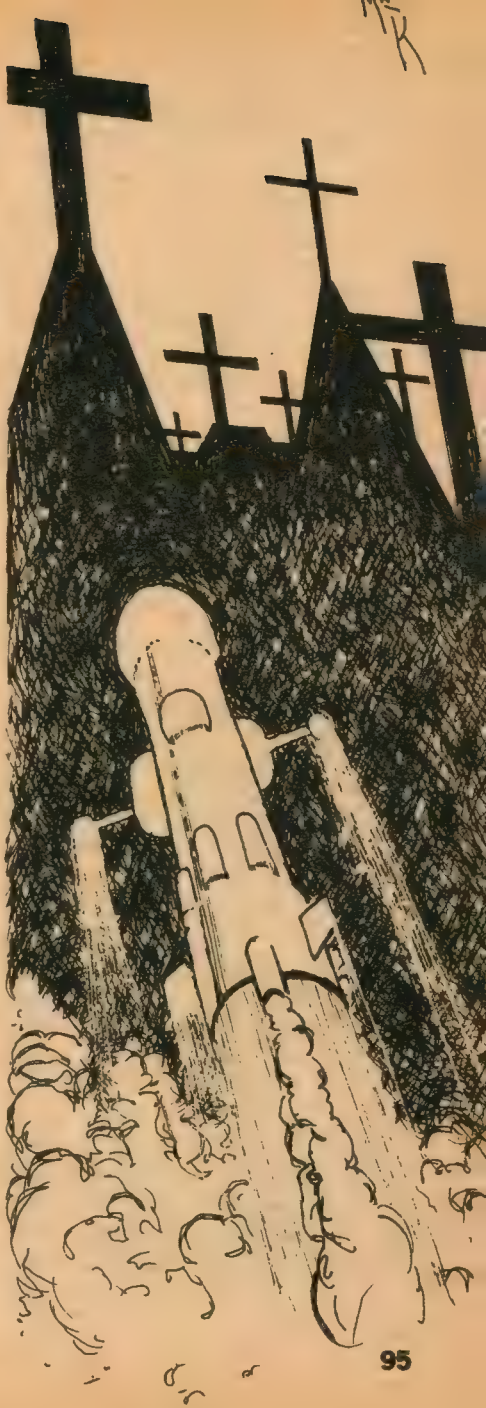
He turned from the escalator and walked toward the waiting subway car. It was filled with perspiring passengers, but he forced his way in between two faceless riders. He stepped on their feet, elbowed their ribs; they didn't feel a thing. Their insensitivity to him served to augment his contempt for them. There had been a time in the past when he had wished for some permanent contact with them, an end to the deathless co-existence. He had tried so hard. How foolish he had been.

Some passengers left at the next stop; giving him some room. He looked at his reflection in the glass of the car's

window. His leather jeans waxed blackly, wrapped around his hips and legs, making him appear taller than he actually was. The silk shirt shimmered with a cool smoothness, its long collar flapping over his leather coat. He was pleased with his appearance. He might even—

A VILLAGER dressed in brown, ragged clothing turned a street corner and threw a molotov cocktail at the phalanx of British troops. The soldiers scattered as the gasoline ignited, a few of them rolling in the dust to extinguish their flaming uniforms. Two others shouldered their automatic rifles and their bullets stitched the attacker to a half-standing wall. The man remained attached to the wall for a split second before crumpling to the dirt, leaving a red-stained smear on the wall that followed his descent. Two other soldiers sprayed a volley of rounds into the surrounding houses, ripping out windows and frames, exploding brick and mortar. At the end of the street grain bags were piled to form a barricade. Men and women huddled behind the barrier shooting and throwing rocks at the troops. A Catholic priest ran across the street away from the barricade and was struck down by a Protestant sniper's bullet. In the dim sky above the battle, crosses stood out like blackened, outstretched corpses.

—JESUS BLINKED his eyes and found himself leaning against the side of the subway car. He wiped some sweat from his forehead, staining the leather sleeve of his coat. Another attack. Those damned visions, more frequent, more



vivid each time. His brain was being dissected, each convolution uncurled, each fissure probed by some metaphysical scalpel. And with every flash of the blade, another nightmare was cut loose from the tissue to go screaming.

He left the subway at Sta. Catherine station, sickened by the motion of train. The escalator took him to the upper level and the maze of slidewalks that crisscrossed the avenue of shops. He rode one to the end of the block, where a massive geodesic dome dwarfed the other buildings. It was the Phylatron, a multi-leveled structure with each level glowing from the light of a different sun. Inside it was the plant life of every known world that the Starships had reached.

Christ entered the main gate, ignoring the robot turnstile which was not programmed to detect such beings as he. He walked among the different levels of the dome, absorbing the vivid explosions of color and form that comprised the galaxy's plant life. The plants seemed trapped, strangled by the glass that surrounded them. Yet they flourished in the controlled climates and the carefully blended atmospheres.

How could they do it? thought Christ. *The very things that gave them life for millions of years.* All killed when they didn't need them anymore. What wasn't dead they put under glass to be gawked at.

He stopped before a sign that read: *Last Living Olive Tree, Earth.* The tree was old, gnarled. Its limbs flowed outward from the trunk in complex patterns, finally ending in tender, green buds. Jesus noticed that there were no

olives on the branches. It was possible that it wasn't the right season for them but he chose to think otherwise. *What's the use, he thought, in growing fruit that nobody will ever eat? Or seeds that would never be planted?*

The Phylatron was filled with prisoners—each one doomed to outlive its captors. It was a cruel punishment for the crime of existence.

Christ leaned over the railing and spit into the artificial soil. Then he turned and squeezed through the crowd, looking for the exit gate. *Screw this place, he thought. Don't know why I ever come here. Better to just get away. Somewhere else. Just get away.*

As he left the dome, he saw the buildings of the city slowly dissolve, the people in the streets melt into waxen blobs. The city became a village of huts with thatched rooves, the people on the slidewalks turned into naked, black-skinned natives. There was a white man standing in their midst; he wore a beige straw hat and steel-rimmed glasses. His features were sharp and his face was narrow—a small bloodless pair of lips, grey, flaccid eyes, and a pointed nose. He looked like a heron standing among them. The man was holding a cross in his upraised hand, gesturing with it, and pointing at it while he spoke. Their god was false, he said. Believe in mine, he said. They would burn if they did not believe. He told them all those things in a furious, quivering voice. And the dark people listened to his entire speech before they killed him.

Christ staggered back from the slidewalk access. The vision faded and the familiar structures of the city reappeared. He'd seen that one before. The

faces were different, the place, the time: but the results were always the same. *Not exactly*, he thought. But did it really matter *who* was killed? He was sick of the damn nightmares. They were constant reminders of what he was to them.

He had tried so hard to be unlike them, unlike what they had said he was. He watched their faces as they glided by him on the slidewalk and he tried to pick out a face and examine it. He looked for something in one of them that could be interpreted as living; there was nothing. He looked out across the vista of the city and saw that it was filled with an endless stream of fleshed-out golems—dead in life.

He walked past the slidewalk, refusing to ride their machinery. The heels of his boots clicked on the glassphalt road surface. He liked the sound they made as he walked. It gave him a feeling of accomplishment to be able to do something that no one else could do, even if he was the only person who heard it or appreciated it. He passed under the stanchions of a mono-rail system just as the train was passing overhead; he recognized the colorcode of the cars. It was going to the Yards. He remembered the Yards as a massive expanse of steel and concrete, a place where the men left for the stars.

The Yards were not far away because he could hear the scream of the Starships' engines leaving the surface. He began walking down the dim streets of an industrial sector toward the Yards, when he heard an odd sound. A human cry came to him, weak and plaintive, and threatening to be engulfed by the shadows.

Christ turned a corner and saw an old man lying crumpled next to a recycling pit. A mound of trash served as his pillow. He was derelict, dressed in rags, and he labored with each liquid breath. Christ smiled and almost laughed when he saw him. He could smell the wine before he even got close to the old man. Strangely enough, he felt a kind of affinity for the drunk; for Christ had often wished that *he* could have a way to escape his own torment.

But he also hated the man.

You scum, he thought, looking at the man. *You deserve to die in that stinking pile of shit. Thousands of years. For this?*

Christ stood over the man clenching and unclenching his fists. One of the old man's eyelids fluttered open revealing a swollen, yellow eye. The one eye stared up at Christ and he felt a tingling sense of awareness touching his brain.

So, thought Christ. *You think you see me, do you? You must be one of the reasons that I'm still around this rotten place! —Why I've had to hang on and watch all the others go. You filth!*

Christ kicked the old man in the ribs with the point of his boot and the man's chest erupted in a spasm of choking, oily coughs. A trickle of blood appeared at the corner of his mouth.

Suddenly the man began to change. Christ watched him as his features coalesced until they became those of a dark-skinned, bearded man. The man was stretched out upon a large wooden machine; his hands were tied to one end and his feet were bound to a large wheel at the other end. There was a theologian dressed in hierarchcal robes asking the tormented man questions; and each

time the man could not answer, the theologian would look at the three hooded judges seated above him, and then turn the wheel another inch. The man on the rack screamed with each turn as the muscles in his limbs were slowly ripped apart. Another question. Another turn. Then the theologian whipped the man with savage fervor, cutting deep grooves into his back.

Christ had stepped back from the old man as the dark images disappeared. The attacks were becoming more frequent, more punishing than ever. He looked down at the unconscious derelict and kicked him again. The man coughed up some blood and it spilled onto Christ's boot. He saw the blood and he jumped on the man, crushing his chest into the mound of trash. The man's breathing finally stopped.

Killed him, thought Christ. *And only because he knew me*. He looked at the body, half-buried in the trash, envious of the escape he had given the man. The ultimate escape that had been denied him by the collective unconscious of man. Spawned and sustained by man's fears and desires, and then forgotten. Almost forgotten. Man evolved but Christ could not change with him. Myths don't evolve, they die. Slowly he turned from the old man's body and walked toward the Yards.

He heard the wailing of the Starships as he grew closer; and he knew what he would now do. There would be no more endless wandering, no more stolen clothing, stolen images. And there would be an end to the nightmarish attacks, the gut-tearing reminders of his reason for being. There was no hope of survival for there was no evolution to

match the shifting thoughts of the human mind.

He walked up the stairs to the entrance of the Yards where a Starship waited to take him away. He had thought of leaving many times in the past; but he had always been afraid. Afraid that he might have been overlooking some slight possibility. But it no longer mattered. Maybe he would find another world, light-years from here, that held love, as well as warmth and life, within its atmosphere. He had seen enough death, felt enough hate.

At the top of the concourse, Christ looked down upon the Yards, an immense steel plain reaching out to the horizon. The fading sunlight turned the sky to a soft purple at the point where it joined edges with the Yards. As he looked out upon the Starships, hunched like great insects ready to rise up humming on invisible wings, he thought of all the years that he had endured before coming to this moment. He recalled the others that once shared his Jungian existence—Dis, Pan, Vishnu, all of them, gone. And now he must also go.

Once past the embarkation terminal, Christ selected the *S. S. Gamow* for his rite of passage. Soon it would be free of Earth's atmosphere, and its FTL drive would hurl it silently into hyperspace. Christ would enter a region where the things of man were unknown, except for the fleeting intrusions of the ships.

The crew of the *Gamow* did not see him or hear him as he walked among them. Each one was performing his last duties prior to the lift-off. Christ watched the main scanner, which showed the purple glow of the Yards at

(continued on page 125)

**BOB SHAW
& WALT WILLIS**
**the
Clubhouse**



THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR

by Bob Shaw & Walt Willis

(PART THREE)

The Enchanted Duplicator is a Pilgrim's Progress of the world of science fiction fandom, as envisioned in 1952 by Bob Shaw and Walter A. Willis, two Irish fans who even then were recognized for their superior talents as writers, editors and humorists in the sf community.

The story follows Jophan from his first vision of fandom while still living in the land of Mundane, along the rough journey he takes into fandom, and describes the obstacles he meets and the companions he finds along the way. His quest is for The Enchanted Duplicator, with which, he has heard, he will be able to publish the Perfect Fanzine.

He crosses the Mountains of Inertia, which separate fandom from Mundane, and picks his way through the Jungle of Inexperience, finally entering Fandom itself—only to discover that Fandom has many aspects, not all of which are to his liking. He enters a magnificent

city, which, he is assured, is the heart of Fandom, only to find it a sham—full of false facades which continually threaten to collapse. Here, in the City of Serious Constructivism, he finds those fans most concerned with putting on a good front for visitors (mostly journalists) from Mundane, and sadly concludes that this is not his destination. He presses on. . .

CHAPTER TWELVE: IN WHICH JOPHAN FINDS A FRIEND

It took Jophan a much shorter time to leave the City of Serious Constructivism than it had to enter it, and he was soon in the suburbs again. On this side of the City, however, they were of a very different character. Here there were no advertising, hoardings, club buildings or hucksters' settlements. Instead, the district seemed to be an exclusive residential area, entirely composed of enormous wooded estates surrounded by high walls. There seemed to

be a limitless number of them, and as the evening wore on, Jophan became very tired. The walls were too high to be climbed, and the gates were all locked, so that try as he might he could find no way to get off the road to make camp for the night.

At last he realized that he could go no further, and that he must spend the night as best he could by the side of the road. Huddling up against the wall near one of the entrance gates, he wrapped his tattered garments about him and made himself as comfortable as the hard surface would allow.

Some time later he was awakened from a fitful sleep by a great blaze of light in his eyes. In his dazed condition it was a few seconds before he realized that he was staring into the headlamps of a huge motorcar which had evidently approached from the direction of Trufandom, and was now halted before the entrance gates. As Jophan watched, the driver got out and unlocked the gates. As he was walking back to his car Jophan called weakly to him. The driver looked round, startled, and then, perceiving Jophan lying against the wall, came over to him.

"Hello, young fellow," he said. "Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

So faint was Jophan with exhaustion that he could scarcely speak. ". . . Jophan," he murmured, "Trufandom. Magic Mimeograph. . . Perfect Fanzine."

"Ah, yes," said the stranger understandingly. "You have come a long way and you have a long way to go. You will be the better for a good meal and a night's rest."

He picked Jophan up and carried his limp body to the car. Then, stopping

only to relock the gates behind him, he drove at high speed up the long entrance drive.

Jophan could not see much of the house in the darkness, but the bedroom to which he was carried was large and luxuriously furnished, and the meal which he was served was tastefully cooked and sumptuously served. Feeling comfortable and safe for the first time since he had embarked on his journey, Jophan fell into a deep sleep.

Next morning he awoke late and found his way down to the breakfast room. His host had evidently breakfasted, and sat before a cheerful fire with a writing machine on his knees. As Jophan entered he put the machine down and rose to greet him.

"Good morning, Jophan," he said. "Let me introduce myself. My name is Profan. . . you may have heard of me?"

"I have, indeed," said Jophan, awed, for before him stood the author of many of the books telling of faraway places and other times which he had read during his life in Mundane—a life which already seemed unreal to him.

He attempted to express his admiration and gratitude, but Profan waved the latter aside and motioned him toward the laden breakfast table.

When Jophan had finished breakfast and joined his host beside the fire he again attempted to express his thanks, but the other would hear none of it. "It is nothing," he said. "I am glad to be able to help any pilgrim on his way to Trufandom. As long," he added wryly, as they do not descend on me in too great numbers."

This was the first resident of Fandom Jophan had encountered who had really encouraged him in his quest, and it put him in good heart.

"Am I then," he asked, "getting near to Trufandom?"

"You have done about half the journey," said Profan, "but since you have come this far I have no doubt you will complete it. I wish I could take you there, but as you know, each Neofan must make his way by his own unaided strength."

"But you know the way, then?" asked Jophan eagerly.

"Indeed, yes," said Profan. "I go there for a visit at least once a year. This, you must know, is a colony of those who wish, and can afford, to travel frequently to both Trufandom and Mundane, and who have accordingly settled here, midway between the two places. Some of us, indeed, came here from Trufandom, for occasionally it happens that a True Fan will forsake the high and dedicated life of Trufandom for our more worldly community. They make their choice, as it were, between the Sacred and the Profan." He smiled at his little joke, and Jophan laughed politely.

"I will tell you all I can about your route," continued Profan, "but I should first warn you that any advice I can give you will be of no avail unless you continue to exercise the courage and discretion which have brought you so far, and unless you keep your shield bright and shining. For you have many dreadful perils yet to face."

"I shall remember," said Jophan.

"Well," said Profan, "the first of these perils is the Desert of Indifference, which begins at the borders of this community and stretches for a great distance unbroken save by an occasional oasis. To carry enough food and water to cross this vast expanse is beyond the powers of any Neofan, so

that you must enlist the aid of native porters from the strange tribe that dwells on the fringe of the desert. On the far side of the desert is a huge rocky defile, known as the Canyon of Criticism, through which lies the only known path to the plateau above where stands the Tower of Trufandom. Further I cannot help you, for the more subtle temptations and perils of the last stage of the journey assume a different form for each Neofan."

"Is that all?" asked Jophan.

"All?" said Profan, amused. "I admire your spirit. But, alas, it is not. On each side of your path, far away but always accessible, are the green, enticing regions known as the Glades of Gafia.² Perpetually you will be pursued by the insidious temptation to turn aside and rest a while there. But, should you do so, there is a great danger that you will be unable to face the effort of resuming your journey, or that, roaming forgetfully through the beckoning glades, you will find yourself back in Mundane. Far better to proceed with moderation so that you will not be driven to the Glades to recuperate from too-strenuous effort."

Profan went on to give Jophan much other helpful advice, to which Jophan listened respectfully. Then he thanked his host again and prepared to resume his journey. Profan went with him to the gate to wish him luck, and then stood watching Jophan march sturdily down the road. Once Jophan looked back to wave a final goodbye. He fancied that he detected in the other's face an emotion which, in the case of one less fortunately situated, he would have taken to be envy. But this cannot have been so, any more than the raising of Profan's hand to his eye can have been

to wipe away an involuntary tear of regret.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: IN WHICH JOPHAN RECRUITS NATIVE BEARERS

Much refreshed by Profan's hospitality, Jophan stepped out briskly, and by noon had left the region of great estates far behind. He was now in open country again, a region of dry scrubland interspersed with bare sandy patches which became more frequent as he journeyed on.

As the country grew more desolate he kept an anxious eye open for the tribesmen whom Profan had mentioned. Then, as he was on the point of turning back to look more carefully, he espied a faint column of smoke rising into the still air some distance to his left. Threading his way through the scrub in that direction he was greatly relieved to come upon a group of tents which he knew must be a village of the strange natives.

The encampment contained several dozen of the Subrs,³ as Profan had said they were called, all sitting perfectly still on the ground before their tents and staring blankly into the distance. They seemed to be a sturdy and honest race, but with a strangely impassive cast of countenance, and their faces showed no emotion when Jophan made his appearance. Nevertheless, he strode into the center of the village and greeted them cheerily, expecting that they would spring to their feet and cluster round him. But instead they continued to ignore his presence completely. Surprised, Jophan raised his voice and greeted them again, announcing his name and the purpose of his visit. But still the strange people seemed unconscious of his existence.

Indeed he would have judged them to be both blind and deaf had he not noticed one of them raise his eyebrows slightly when Jophan had finished speaking. Incensed at their apathy he lost his temper and flew into a rage, jumping up and down and waving his arms to attract their attention, and then launching into a loud and impassioned discourse, describing in detail the importance of his purpose and the impossibility of fulfilling it without their help. At this a few Subrs turned their eyes curiously in his direction, but none of them showed the slightest sign of answering his call.

In desperation Jophan went up to the native who had appeared to be the first to notice him, and pleaded with him for an explanation of the tribe's reluctance to cooperate.

The Subr looked indifferently at him and spoke.

"Many Neofen come," he grunted. "Many seek help. Many leave us in desert, our help wasted. You show difference."

For a moment Jophan could not understand what he meant, and then he realized he was being called on to demonstrate that he had the necessary stamina and strength of will to cross the desert. Resignedly, he began to run round and round the encampment.

The afternoon wore on, and Jophan continued to run round the encampment, watched impassively by the Subrs. Every now and then he would stop and plead with them again, and each time they evinced a little more interest.

Finally one of them rose and nodded at Jophan. Still without a word he picked up a skin water-bottle, and a package of food and stood waiting. His

example was followed by several others until a small group had collected at Jophan's side. He thanked them gratefully, and the small expedition started off into the desert.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: IN WHICH JOPHAN STARTS ACROSS THE DESERT OF INDIFFERENCE

As they progressed ever farther into the wilderness the hot sun and scorching sand began to take their toll of Jophan's strength, and he realized more fully the magnitude of the task before him. He also came to appreciate more fully the virtues of native porters. Although the Subrs preserved their unnatural silence, uttering no word either of praise or condemnation of Jophan's behavior, whatever it might be, they showed their feeling clearly enough by their actions. Twice when Jophan, unnerved by the hardships of the desert, spoke tactlessly to them or made some error of judgment, some of them quietly left the expedition and were never seen again. But, on the other hand, whenever he exhibited his better qualities, reinforcements appeared to arrive from nowhere. Thus, by studying their reactions carefully, he was able to increase the strength of his party by quite a substantial number.

It would have fared ill with him had he not done so, for as day followed day the strain of the journey began to tell on him. The heat of the sun seemed to dry up the very marrow of his bones, and its setting brought only momentary relief, for with nightfall the air became bitterly cold, and he passed many sleepless hours shivering under the meager protection of his blanket. The loyal support of the sturdy Subrs was a great comfort to him, but willing as they were

they could carry only a certain amount of their dried food and it seemed to accord ill with his constitution. It was of a tasteless and insipid nature, affording only the merest sustenance and gravely deficient in energy-producing qualities. Jophan, though in no danger of actual starvation, began to grow weak and faint of purpose, and at times his eyes strayed longingly to the green Glades of Gafia to be seen clearly in the distance.

So it was when after many days the party came upon the first signs of other life in the desert. It had appeared in the distance to be a small hut, but on approaching more closely Jophan saw that it was actually a species of altar before which crouched a pale and sickly Neofan. He seemed to be in the process of muttering some prayer or incantation, and Jophan waited patiently until he had finished before addressing him.

"Good day, friend," he said politely, when the Neofan seemed to have completed his mysterious rites. "My name is Jophan, and I am on my way to Trufandom to obtain the Magic Mimeograph, so that I may publish the Perfect Fanzine."

"Good day, Neofan," said the other, somewhat superciliously. "My name is Sycofan, and I am on a similar errand. I trust you will set up your altar at a reasonable distance from mine."

"Altar?" asked Jophan, surprised. "What for?"

"Why, to invoke the BNFicent spirits," said the other condescendingly. "Surely you don't imagine that you can cross the desert without their help?"

"I did not know it was possible for a mere Neofan to have any intercourse

with the BNFs⁵ until he reached Trufandom," said Jophan wonderingly.

"Why, of course it is," said the other. "You must—" At this point there came a blinding glow of light above the altar, and Sycofan threw himself on his knees and began beating his head on the ground.

In a few moments there was a loud clap of thunder, and a small solid object fell on the altar and rolled off on to the ground. Jophan remained erect and gazed curiously at the phenomenon.

"There!" said Sycofan smugly, snatching the object up and showing it to Jophan. It seemed to be a sort of thin pancake or waffle, rolled up like a scroll of paper.

"What is it?" asked Jophan.

"It's called a manna-script,"⁶ said Sycofan, devouring it greedily. Jophan watched enviously until the other had swallowed the last succulent morsel.

"I suppose you will be resuming your journey now?" he asked. An uneasy expression crossed the other's face. "Er . . . no," he said, rather shamefacedly. "I think I shall wait here until my strength is built up. The manna-scripts need a great deal of praying for, and I haven't enough of them yet."

Jophan looked at Sycofan's weak face and privately decided that it was doubtful if he would ever complete the journey to Trufandom. After pondering the matter for some minutes he came to a conclusion.

"I was told," he said earnestly, "that the journey to Trufandom is one that can be accomplished only by a fan's unaided efforts, and I believe this to be true. I cannot believe that if the BN-Ficent spirits give aid to one who merely asks it they would withhold it from one who shows that he deserves it.

I urge you to leave your altar and come with me."

"Why, you're only a Neofan," sneered the other. "Why should I associate with you when I can have the help of BNFs?"

"Even they were once Neofen like me," said Jophan quietly. "Yet they are wise and will not waste their gifts. You may find," he warned Sycofan gravely, "that they will not continue to feed you indefinitely."

But Sycofan would not abandon his parasitic existence, and instead promptly embarked on another session of prayer.

Shaking his head regretfully, Jophan left him and resumed his journey.

Before he had gone much further, Jophan was both delighted and relieved to find that his surmise had been correct. To the accompaniment of a blaze of light and clap of thunder a bulky manna-script fell beside him; and before disappearing the light moved on toward Trufandom as if in encouragement.

Thereafter the manna-scripts fell with increasing frequency during the remainder of his journey so that he had no longer any cause to worry on the score of food.

—BOB SHAW & WALT WILLIS

NOTES:

1. "Profan", as he appears here, is an archetype and not an individual, but more than one reader has identified him as, alternatively, Forry Ackerman, Bob Tucker, or even Bob Silverberg. All three are one-time fans who have moved on to professional status in the sf world without turning their backs upon the fandom which birthed them; Tucker in particular remains a

"trufan" at heart . . . but keeps his home address confidential so that he is not inundated with a flood of worshipful neofans.

2. "Gafia": Getting Away From It All. This phrase was originally coined to describe escape from Mundane *into* the world of fandom, but was corrupted in the late 1940's to mean a loss of interest in fandom and subsequently dropping out. Gafia, among younger fans, is often caused by the discovery of the Opposite Sex or college; among older fans it is a temptation when the routines of fanzine publishing become boring. A fan can, of course, gafiate for a time and then return to fannish activity—and as fandom grows older, this is happening more frequently: fans who were active a decade or longer ago as teenagers are now coming back as married adults with families and careers . . . and fond memories of fandom as they knew it. In addition to Gafia, there is Fafia: Forced Away From It All—usually by something drastic, like the draft.

3. This entire section is an analogy for the launching of a new fanzine by an unknown fan. The "Subrs" are, of course, those fans who provide early support, during the period when fandom at large is indifferent to yet another new fanzine, with their subscriptions. These fans rarely write letters or express their opinions of the fanzine verbally, but they send money periodically (know by faneditors as "sticky quarters," because the coins are often scotch-taped to an index card or something similar) as long as they find the fanzine of interest. In fact, the "Subrs" belong to two groups: those fans who are feeling their own way into fandom and are sampling its wares via

fanzine review columns (such as *The Clubhouse* in its normal function), sending off their sticky quarters to those fanzines which look most interesting, and maintaining subscriptions to those they like; and those fans whose participation in fandom over the years remains totally passive, limited to financial support. One legendary "Subr" is the mysterious W. C. Houston, who throughout the fifties (and perhaps still today) subscribed to every fanzine being published, his only communications his sticky quarters and his rubber-stamped name and address. For a neofan, subscriptions are more of a psychological necessity than a physical requirement; the money which comes in is rarely enough to pay his costs in publishing his fanzine. Sooner or later, the neofaneditor decides that good as these subscriptions are, they are not enough: he wants contributions, letters, and public acknowledgement of his work. (But more of this next issue . . .)

4. "Sycofan": sycophant. A fan who butters up better-known fans in return for favors from them—usually material for his fanzine. Flattery will get you somewhere—but not very far, in the long run.

5. "BNF": Big Name Fan. The converse of "neofan": neophyte. A BNF is a fan who is so-recognized by his contemporaries; the title cannot be self-bestowed.

6. The "manna-script," of course, is a manuscript. Fanzines need subscriptions to cover (or try to cover) costs, but more than this they need contributions—material to fill their pages. And while every good fanzine editor does his share of soliciting material from those BNFs whose work he likes, a good

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the Science

GREG BENFORD

...in Science Fiction



DEATH OF A MINOR STAR

IT MAY SEEM an academic exercise indeed to consider the final stage of evolution of our star, and the effects this will have on our own biosphere. Yet I believe it is useful to think through, because it gives a good idea of the vast scales in both energy and time upon which solar processes occur. Most people, when they think of the life on Earth, immediately imagine the nova super-nova stage of our star. However, this simply isn't going to happen. Our present knowledge of solar evolution pretty well rules out the possibility that our sun—which is, after all, a rather ordinary sort of star—will ever become a nova, and explode throughout the solar system. Robert A. Heinlein dealt with this event in a memorable story called “The Year of the Jackpot.” He described rather eloquently the growth of a dot upon the surface of our sun, which soon ate up the surface of the disk and in a matter of minutes reached the earth, blew away the atmosphere, boiled away the ocean and of course ended all human life.

Fortunately, the eventual end of this

planet will be not very dramatic and perhaps—though this is of course pure speculation—it may be avoidable.

The most surprising fact about stars of our type is not that they eventually die, but that they live so long. Stars are formed from the gradual creation of dust into lumps large enough to initiate hydrogen fusion at the core. Stars very quickly find an equilibrium which gives them a constant radius, constant luminosity, and a very long life time. This is called the main sequence, and almost all stars spend almost all of their life on the main sequence.

While there, they burn hydrogen. That is, hydrogen nuclei collide, stick together, and give off energy. A star only runs into trouble when it begins to run out of hydrogen at the very center of the star, the core. There is a lot of hydrogen in a star and stars remain on the main sequence for as long as 6 to 10 billion years. It is estimated that our sun will remain on this main sequence for 6 billion years into the future. So it seems rather distant to even think about such a problem, particularly considering that quite a few political

analysts feel human life will not remain on this planet for longer than another generation or two.

When the star's hydrogen runs out, it begins to use whatever helium is within its core for further fusion reaction. Every star is urged to contract by the simple pull of its own gravity. Also, its temperature forces its own hot gases outward, so that an equilibrium is struck between gravity and temperature.

It is important to keep the time scales involved firmly fixed in our minds, because they are vast indeed. Our star is about 4.5 billion years old. When it is 9.2 billion years old it will have expanded, due to a slightly increased rate of hydrogen burning, until its luminosity is one and one half times greater than it is at present and its diameter is about 30% larger. This will represent a rather considerable increase in the Earth's temperature as it orbits around our star.

Probably this increase in temperature can be avoided by some sort of cosmic engineering on a very large scale. For example, dust can be made to orbit between us and our star, cutting down on the sunlight which gets through. Of course, this will take place over a time scale of 4 to 5 billion years, so someone is going to have to watch and be sure that dust remains in proper orbit for a very long time indeed. But suppose we skip all the way ahead, until our star is very near the end of its life: at that point drastic measures indeed will have to be taken to preserve life anywhere within the solar system.

This, because the sun will begin to expand as it starts to burn hotter and hotter at its core, forcing the outer envelope further and further away from

the hot burning core. It may be some slight consolation to know that, as the sun expands, the planets will all uniformly begin to become warmer.

Particularly, Mars within the time that the sun has increased its energy production by about 1½ times, will become as warm as earth is at present. We could image some gigantic WPA project which would grind up the rocks of Mars and whatever water lies beneath the surface of that planet, producing oxygen and water and other gases. An atmosphere could be generated, human life supported, an ecology created and made to balance, and at least some portion (if not all) of the human race transported there to live. This sort of escape hatch will remain open to humanity and will be a reasonable solution for billions of years. Of course, this means giving up the Earth. Perhaps that is a better solution than suspending dust between the Earth and our sun, but it necessarily means living on a less interesting piece of real estate, and a smaller one.

Carl Sagan and some of his co-workers recently described in detail how the Earth's atmosphere will respond, if unshielded by dust, to this increase in the sun's energy production and luminosity. Essentially, Earth will become very much like Venus. Our atmosphere will convert into carbon dioxide, at temperatures which will melt lead. Sagan and his co-authors conclude that, even though Mars will become inhabitable from the standpoint of temperature, this will probably present small consolation indeed to the human race.

It seems to me this is an unnecessarily pessimistic view, whether it is taken of the human race billions of

years in the future, or of some other race which may even at this moment be facing a similar problem. I rather believe that an intelligent race could transport itself to an outer planet—for instance, Mars—or shield itself by, for example, grinding up the asteroids, and suspending the dust between the Earth-moon system and the sun. Though such a project is indeed enormous it is not beyond imagination and therefore may well be achieved. However, though it seems to us vast and imposing, such a construction of dust will still be very, very hard to detect outside the solar system. Therefore, it is not of the sort of cosmic engineering that Freeman Dyson hypothesized we could see, perhaps, with infrared telescopes.

The final stage of stellar evolution is short, and disastrous even for the sort of expanded environment we might construct on Mars. By the time our sun is 9.2 billion years old, it will begin to run out of hydrogen altogether at its core. A dense helium core will form, surrounded by a very hot hydrogen-burning region, which will be in turn surrounded by a very tenuous envelope of cooler hydrogen. To point out the relative dimensions, suppose we reduce the size of typical red giant star by a factor of about 1 trillion. Then the star would just about fit inside an ordinary class room. But the helium core, which contains about 1 quarter of all the mass in the star, would be no larger than the period at the end of this sentence. Around it would swirl a very thin cloak of hot, red gas. This is the well known red giant phase of stellar evolution.

If the Earth remained in its present orbit in these last days of our sun's stellar evolution, any remaining atmosphere would blow away, and the

very rock would begin to melt and flow on its surface. Mars, too, would no longer be a safe haven, even though mankind might have altered it to suit his taste. And as our sun continues to expand and redden and its heat production becomes larger, thoughts of moving outward, perhaps to Jupiter, would be thwarted by the fact that Jupiter is not the sort of planet Mars is. It cannot be readily converted over to an Earth-like environment, because it is truly massive (it is almost large enough to become a star itself) and it contains vast amounts of hydrogen which would be very difficult to assimilate into an earth-like environment. The same is true of all the outer planets. By this point, the only way to preserve human life would be to save a small fraction of the race in an artificial environment orbiting out somewhere among the gas giant planets, or to have the foresight to bring the Earth or Mars along on the journey out from the sun.

After all, why not take the Earth with us? If we leave it behind, as the sun's outer envelope expands a frictional drag will be created on the Earth and eventually our planet would spiral into the expanding solar envelope, to be consumed. The very idea of moving an entire planet is, of course, absurd for our present technology. But in an exercise of the imagination, we should not allow ourselves to be daunted by current circumstances. There is nothing impossible about moving a planet. The energy requirement is vast, but in the billion years that remain to humanity I should think we might learn how to produce as much energy as even this gargantuan task demands.

What is *not* so simple is finding a way to move the Earth at all. In spite of the

imagination of E. E. Smith, there is no such thing as a "reactionless drive." If we do not go beyond our current understanding of theoretical mechanics, and try to move the Earth by simply using the ordinary action-reaction principle, it is not clear how the job can be done. Essentially, we will have to move the earth like a rocket. That is, we must throw something off one end in order to push the Earth away from the sun. Now, we can easily put rockets into orbit around the Earth, or fire them off into the sun or beyond the solar system, and sure enough, this alters the orbit of the earth in a very, very small way. But because the rockets we use now are rather small, and leave with what is (by solar system standards) a rather low velocity, we would have to throw most of the mass of this planet off into space in order to move what is left very far around the solar system. This is plainly unsatisfactory. The only solution to using a lot of mass at low velocity is to use a small amount of mass with very high velocity. The only way I can imagine to do this is by a process of electromagnetic acceleration.

This means grinding up the matter, putting a charge on it, and shooting it through an electric field so that the fields can push on it for some time, bringing it up to a very large velocity (close to the velocity of light) and then allowing it to leave our atmosphere. All right, suppose we can do this. It is not beyond imagination. But there is one other difficulty.

We have grown rather fond of our atmosphere. I cannot imagine that the human race would like to give it up, especially for (on the time scales we are speaking of) a billion years or so. But this is what would be necessary, if we

want to sling matter away at nearly the speed of light. Such projectiles, tearing away from earth at light speed, would heat our atmosphere and blow it away. So we must either package the atmosphere and take it along, thereby destroying the biosphere of the planet, or we must avoid throwing material through the atmosphere to get it off the earth.

This latter solution means extending some sort of tube or network of tubes up through the atmosphere until they open onto the high vacuum of outer space. This will mean, at a minimum, a cylinder of approximately 50 miles to 100 miles in height. These tubes must be held at high vacuum, so that the matter we have accelerated with electric fields can be pushed through them at nearly the speed of light. The precise details of how and in what direction the matter leaves will of course have to be worked out, but this is simply arithmetic.

The projectiles will be shot out directly behind us as we move in our orbit around the sun. This will make the Earth gently spiral outward, moving gradually away from the star as the star expands. Because the temperature of the star will fall off as our orbital radius increases, to keep the same energy input on the surface of our planet will require that we do not move to rapidly away, and thus the sun will gradually seem to grow larger and redder even though we are in fact running away from it.

I am talking about a time scale of a billion or more years here—not an event which will take place over night. The Earth will have to be maneuvered outward slowly and with great attention to what this perturbation is

doing to the rest of the planets. After all, we don't want to destroy the delicate balance within the solar system and find ourselves being bombarded with asteroids or having our orbit knock around in some unpredictable manner. Eventually, to survive around the red giant star that grows behind us, we will have to move out to take up residence midway between the present planets of Uranus and Neptune. Of course, these will not look the same as they do now. As the sun pours out more energy, the gas giant planets will first find their hydrogen escaping, because they are getting warmer, and then successive layers of their atmospheres will be eroded away as the temperature further increases. We may—if we haven't already by then—finally see what the cores of Jupiter and Saturn look like.

If any life has evolved in those deep gas giant planets, it will find itself unable to persist. Since life on Jupiter is probably in a sea of some sort, we can guess that it probably will not have any technology to speak of, just as our dolphins do not have any technology. So these races would be unable to save themselves, and the growth of the red giant star would destroy them.

As we eventually orbit out between the dwindling gas giants, all of humanity will be engaged in the housekeeping operation of making certain the ecology remains in balance, and in making sure that the matter we are throwing away into space doesn't destroy the planet in some unforeseen way. Of course, there are always going to be unforeseen side effects to such a massive enterprise, and that is what all the work will be about. Even if we establish a stable orbit with just enough

energy coming in from the sun, and we have retained our atmosphere in good order, the drama will not be over. Shortly after the sun reaches its maximum diameter, which will probably envelop the present Earth orbital radius, the star will begin to contract.

It will shrink down into its final white dwarf stage. This time net energy received by the Earth will begin to dwindle away, so that our planetary rocket engine must be used to force the earth back into a closer, smaller orbit. We must go back inward until finally we are only about 3 million miles out from the white dwarf star that remains. This is considerably closer than our present orbital radius, which is 93 million miles. The sun's white dwarf stage will last quite a while. This entire odyssey of ours, from our present orbit out to around Neptune, and then back again, even closer to the star, will take perhaps only a few 100 million years. But we can live in the little life zone that surrounds the little white dwarf star for considerably longer. The trouble is that as the white dwarf gradually sputters out, we will have no place to go from there. The last nuclear energy inside the star will begin to run out, and the sun will eventually evolve into a burnt out cinder giving off nothing but an eerie red glow. This is, of course, the end. Humanity can either elect to stay until the final reel, or it can move on to another solar system.

The reason I have gone into such detail about this is that it is probably impossible for human beings to comprehend the enormous time scales upon which the stellar dramas are acted out. I have routinely gone about the mechanics of how we could avoid ex-

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a sky a hemisphere of milkglass. The Tanchinaros were immensely popular in Saurkash and the stadium was crowded far beyond capacity. Out of idle curiosity Glinnes looked along the line of boxes; there as before sat Lute Casagave, again with his camera. Odd, thought Glinnes.

The teams formed in ranks for the parade and the sheirls came forth: for the Tanchinaros Filene Sadjo, a fresh-faced fisherman's daughter from Far Spinney; for the Gorgons, Karue Liriant, a tall dark-haired girl with a ripe and sumptuous figure, evident even under the classic folds of her white gown. Lord Gensifer had kept her identity a mystery until a team-meeting three days before the game. Karue Liriant had not tried to make herself popular: a bad omen in itself. Still Karue Liriant was only the least factor disruptive of the morale. The left side guard Ramos, annoyed by Lord Gensifer's criticisms had quit the team. "It's not that I'm so expert," he told Lord Gensifer, "It's just that you're so much worse. I should be *ki-yik-yik-yik-king* at you rather than you *ki-yikking* at me."

"Off the field with you!" barked Lord Gensifer. "If you hadn't quit I would send you down in any case."

"Bah," said Ramos. "If you sent down all those complaining you'd be playing by yourself."

The question of a replacement arose during post-practice refreshment. "Here's an idea to help the team," Lucho told Lord Gensifer. "Suppose you were to play guard, as you're well able to do; you're big enough and obstinate enough; then I know a man

who'd make us a very able captain indeed."

"Oh?" said Lord Gensifer frostily. "And who is this paragon?"

"Denzel Warhound, now with the Gannets."

Lord Gensifer took pains to control his voice. "It might be simpler and less disruptive merely to recruit a new guard."

Lucho had no more to say. The new guard appeared at the next practice session: A man even less capable than Ramos.

The Gorgons, therefore, came to play the Tanchinaros in less than an optimum frame of mind.

After circling the field the two teams pulled down their helmets, to accomplish that always startling metamorphosis of men into heroic demiurges, each assuming in some degree the quality of the mask. For the first time Glinnes saw the Tanchinaro masks; they were striking affairs of silver and black, with red and violet plumes; the Tanchinaros made a fine display as they took the field. As expected, the Tanchinaros were strong and massive. "A team of ten guards and a fat old man," as Carbo Gilweg had expressed it. The 'fat old man' was captain Nilo Neronavy, who never left the protective radius of his hange, and whose plays were as forthright as Lord Gensifer's were intricate and confusing. Glinnes anticipated no difficulties in defense; the Tanchinaro forwards were inept on the trapeze, and the swift Gorgon front line could play them one at a time. Offense was a different matter. Glinnes, had he been captain, would have drawn them in and out, to one side, then another, until a path flickered open for

a lightning lunge by one of the forwards. He doubted if Lord Gensifer would use the strategy, or even if he could control the team well enough to orchestrate the quick feints and plays.

The Gorgons won the green light. The gong sounded; the light flashed green; the game was on. "Twelve-ten, *ki-yik!*" cried Lord Gensifer, thrusting the forwards and rovers to the moat with the guards advancing two stations. "Thirteen-eight!": a thrust at the side passages by wings and rovers, with strikes ready to jump the moat. So far; so good. The next call almost on the instant should be, "Eight-thirteen," signifying rovers across the forwards in a feint to the left. The rovers crossed the moat; the Tanchinaro forwards hesitated, and now there was time for a swift attack on the Tanchinaro right wing; but Lord Gensifer vacillated; the forwards recovered; the rovers recrossed the moat and the light shone red.

So the game went for fifteen minutes. Two Tanchinaro forwards were tanked on offense, but were able to return to the field before the Gorgons could exploit the advantage.

Lord Gensifer became impatient and tried a new tactic: precisely that play which Glinnes had used to score against the Gannets, and which was quite inappropriate against the Tanchinaros. As a result all four forwards and a rover and Lord Gensifer himself were tanked, and the Tanchinaros marched down the field to an easy ring. Lord Gensifer paid over a thousand ozols ransom.

The teams regrouped. "I know one way to win the game," Lucho told Glinnes. "Keep Tammi in the foul tank."

"Very Well," said Glinnes. "The 'Sheer Stupidity' play. Tell Savat; I'll tell Chust."

Green light; Lord Gensifer set his team into motion. Two seconds before the light changed the entire Gorgon front-line moved out in an apparently senseless direction. In astounded reaction Lord Gensifer bellowed counterplays well after the light had flashed red. The game halted while Lord Gensifer, not entirely unaware of what had happened, hunched himself down in the foul tank.

Glinnes, as right strike, assumed control. During red light the Tanchinaros tried to storm the moat; by dint of precise timing, the Gorgon forwards tanked both Tanchinaro strikes and the wings retreated. Green light. Glinnes put his ideas into effect. He called plays in a series; the front surged back and forth; then the Gorgon forwards and rovers were across; the Tanchinaro rovers were tanked, but the Tanchinaro guards remained: an inexorable bulwark. Glinnes called up his own two center guards; eight men drove down the center; the Tanchinaro guards were forced to mass. Glinnes crossed behind, thrust Cargo Gilweg into the tank as a friendly gesture and seized the gold ring.

Lord Gensifer came sulkily forth from the tank, speaking no word to anyone, and collected a thousand ozols from Nilo Neronavy. The teams took positions. Red light. The Tanchinaros massed on their own left side, hoping to tempt some reckless Gorgon across the moat. Glinnes caught Lucho's eye; both knew the other's intent and both crossed, both raced up the center lanes

at a speed to confound a team ostensibly on offense. Behind came the wings and the rovers; a flurry of feints, swings and the Gorgons were in the back court engaging the guards; Wild Man Wilmer Guff, the rover, slid past and grabbed the ring.

"That's another way to win," Lucho crowed to Glinnes. "We attack during off-light when Tammi can't argue."

The teams regrouped. Red light again. Nilo Neronavy employed the strategy best suited to the Tanchinaro abilities: a grinding advance up the field. Both Lucho and Chust were tanked; Savat and Glinnes were driven back. The Tanchinaros brought all guards to the moat. Green light: Lord Gensifer called: "Twenty-two!"; a simple play as good as any, sending the forwards pell-mell toward the Tanchinaro back-court. The Tanchinaro guards retreated, the Gorgons could not win past. Carbo Gilweg engaged Glinnes; the two struggled with their buffs; up, back, hook, parry; Gilweg lowered his head, drove forward; Glinnes tried to dodge but could not avoid Gilweg's buff: into the tank. Gilweg looked down at him. "How's the water?"

Glinnes made no reply. The gong had sounded; one or another of the Tanchinaros had taken a ring.

The teams took a five minute rest period. Lord Gensifer moved austere off to the side; Lucho nevertheless went to offer him counsel. "They'll be playing Big Push again, for certain; in fact they won't wait; during green light they'll push. We've got to break down their center before they get their line across."

Lord Gensifer made no reply.

The teams once more took the field. Green light: Lord Gensifer brought his men up to the moat. The Tanchinaros had assumed a hedgehog formation, daring the Gorgons to attack: a situation where the agile Gorgon forwards, swinging the trapezes, might well tank isolated Tanchinaros—or might be tanked. Lord Gensifer refused to attack. Red light: the Tanchinaros remained in defensive formation. Green light: Lord Gensifer still restrained his men: a policy unwise only in that it indicated uncertainty. Glinnes called to him: "Let's go over; we can always come back!"

Lord Gensifer stood stonely silent.

Red light. The Tanchinaros came forward: all eleven men, 'the sheirl guarding the pedestal', as the saying went. As before they thrust past the moat, with only the guards on Tanchinaro territory.

Green light: Lord Gensifer called for a feint to right and an attack on the Tanchinaros who had gained a foothold to the left: in the scrimmage two men from each team were tanked, but meanwhile the Tanchinaros had thrust far down the Gorgon right wall, and the ineffectual new guard was tanked.

The light went red. The Tanchinaros foot by foot thrust toward the Gorgon pedestal, where Karue Liriant waited, showing no apparent distress.

Green light: Lord Gensifer was faced with a dire situation. His forwards held the center but Tanchinaro guards and rovers coming down the center lanes cramped and constrained them. Glinnes attacked the Tanchinaro strike; from the corner of his eye he thought to

see a free course down-field, if he could only feint one of the guards out of position.

Red light. Glinnes swung away from the Tanchinaro strike. He raced to the moat and across; he was free; he was clear! Carbo Gilweg, making a desperate effort, dove out to hook Glinnes with his buff; both fell into the moat.

Gong: three times. The game was won.

The field judge summoned Lord Gensifer and called for ransom, which was denied. The music became exalted and sad; a music golden as sunset, with rhythm like a beating heart and chords sweet with human passion. For the third time the field judge called for ransom; for the third time Lord Gensifer ignored the call. The Tanchinaro strike pulled the ring; the gown fell away from Karue Liriant; naked and unconcerned she faced the audience; in fact she showed a slight smile. Casually she preened herself, tilting up on one toe, looking over first one shoulder then the other, while the crowd blinked in wonder at this unfamiliar demonstration.

An odd speculation came to Glinnes' mind; he peered. Karue Liriant was pregnant? The possibility occurred to others as well; a murmur rose in the stands. Lord Gensifer hurriedly brought up a cloak and escorted his still smiling sheirl from the pedestal. Then he turned to the team. "There will be no party tonight. I now have the unpleasant duty of punishing insubordination. Tyran Lucho, you may regard yourself as at liberty. Glinnes Hulden, your conduct—"

Glinnes said, "Lord Gensifer, spare me your criticism. I resign from the team. Playing conditions are impossible."

Ervil Savat, the left strike, said; "I resign as well."

"And I," said Wilmer Guff the right rover, one of the strong players who had carried the brunt of the load. The remainder of the team hesitated. If they all resigned they might find no other organized team on which to play. They held their tongues in a troubled silence.

"So be it," said Lord Gensifer. "We are well rid of you; all have been headstrong; and you Glinnes Hulden and you, Tyran Lucho, have sedulously sought to undermine my authority."

"Only that we might score a ring or two," said Lucho. "But no matter; good luck to you and your Gorgons." He removed his mask and handed it over to Lord Gensifer. Glinnes did likewise, then Ervil Savat and Wilmer Guff. Bump Candolf, the single effective guard, could see no future playing on the team as it was presently constituted; he also gave his mask into Lord Gensifer's grasp.

Outside the dressing room Glinnes told his four comrades. "Tonight all to my house, for what in effect will be our victory party. We're free of that moon-calf Tammi."

"Basically a sound notion," said Lucho. "I'm in the mood for a jug or two, but there'll be more merriment along Altramar Beach, and we'll find a sympathetic audience."

"As you wish. My verandah is quiet of late; no one sits there but myself, and maybe a merling or two during my absence."

Along the way to the dock the five met Carbo Gilweg with two other Tanchinaro guards, all in high spirits. "Well played, Gorgons, but today you encountered the desperate Tanchinaros."

"Thank you for the consolation," said Glinnes, "but don't call us Gorgons. We no longer enjoy this distinction."

"What's all this? Did Lord Gensifer give up his wild scheme of directing an hussade team?"

"He gave up on us, and we gave up on him. The Gorgons still exist, or so I suppose. All Tammi needs is a new front line."

"By an odd coincidence," said Garbo Gilweg, "that's all the Tanchinaros need too. . . Where are you bound?"

"Out to Lucho's in Altramar, for our private victory party."

"Better yet, visit the Gilwegs for a more authentic version."

"I think not," said Glinnes. "You won't want our long faces at the feast."

"To the contrary! I have a special reason for inviting you. In fact, let's stop into the Magic Trench for a mug of beer."

The eight men seated themselves around a round table, and the serving-girl brought forth eight ample goblets.

Gilweg frowned into his foam. "Let me develop an idea—an obvious and excellent idea. The Tanchinaros, like Lord Gensifer, need a front line. It's no secret; everybody admits the fact.

We're a team of ten guards and a beer keg."

"That's all very well and I see your point," said Glinnes, "but your forwards, whether they're really guards or not, are sure to object."

"They have no right to object. The Tanchinaros are an open club; anyone can join, and if he cuts the mustard he plays. Think of it! For the first time in memory: the miserable Saurkash Tanchinaros a real team!"

"The idea has appeal," Glinnes looked at his fellows. "How do you others feel?"

"I want to play hussade," said Wilmer Guff. "I like to win. I am in favor of the scheme."

"Count me in," said Lucho. "Perhaps we'll have a chance to play the Gorgons."

Savat agreed to the proposal, but Candolf was dubious. "I'm a guard. There's no place for me on the Tanchinaros."

"Don't be too sure," said Gilweg. "Our left wing guard is Pedro Shamoran, and he's got a bad leg. There'll be a shuffle of places, and maybe you can even play left rover; you're certainly quick enough. Why not try?"

"Very well; why not?"

Gilweg drained his mug. "Good then. It's settled! And now we can all celebrate the Tanchinaro victory!"

—TO BE CONCLUDED—

—JACK VANCE

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Dear Ted;

In the November issue of *AMAZING*, I found something that did amaze me! It was a book review by Thomas F. Monteleone, concerning Arthur C. Clarke's newest book—*The Wind from the Sun*. And, my question is rather a simple one. Who gave Monteleone a typewriter and a piece of paper? (And, is he really taking a critic's course from Zimmerman—of *Newsweek*?)

What I find so distasteful about the entire matter is the theme that Monty pasted all over the review. That theme was the old 'I expected him to do it the way I thought he'd do it, but since he didn't, it ain't no damn good and the author has failed' routine. Then, insult to injury, Monty stomps on Clarke with a drastic comparison of the works to "Sidney Glutz", implicating [*sic*] that Clarke has failed the market. After all that, Monty tries to crawl to the sidelines by saying, "I have always admired Clarke's work in the past. . . But"! So, after the worst book review in modern times, he ends with "at least wait for the paperback," attacking the price of the book to the worth.

The entire review reads like the old idea of 'I am disappointed, so you should be too'. Well, I am not! And, being an admirer of all sf authors and their works (as my own personal library shows), I see many of the old

grand-masters still sending people on the usual mind-bending trips, that made the author famous.

Now, much has been said about Heinlein's *I Will Fear No Evil*. Yet, as you read thru the pages, can you really understand what he is trying to say? Can you read between the lines? If you can, you will understand that Heinlein's history of 'mental theories' in his other stories have been realistically [*sic*] justified, presenting a jump-off-point to *Assignment In Eternity* and *Time For The Stars*. (Books that still present good reading for all humanity.) And, as for the sex in the book, look at the end results of the novel. That in itself says something for the tampering of nature, and the character of the entire story. So, the grand-master has not lost his stuff—he's just saying "Look at the world around you, evaluate and advance wisely."

Clarke is not a penny different. Yet, his theme is more direct. He makes you stop and think who you are, where you're going and how others are going with you. Are we going right? If an author can make you deeply wonder that, then in my books he is a grand-master. (But, he doesn't build it out of direct facts—rather he tells a story, leaving you to ponder via the theme.) When an author makes you wonder and resent the stupidity of the human race, that writer has the making of a grand-master. When he does it time and time again, and we respect him for it, then he is a grand-master!

Many of the people we now call the grand-masters of sf are nothing more than just

masters, who have been over-rated. Even many of the beginning grand-masters, who founded sf, fall short of a true grand-master title. But, such people have been rated by us for a reason. And, what ever that reason—it differs from person to person. What ever that the reason may be, that we use for such a rating, it should be respected and not one man playing his own game of popularity, to change things. So, we create our grandmasters, each man seeing something different for doing so, and it should not be up to one man to change that! (That is up to the author, himself!)

Monty appeared to see “scientific pre-mesis” [sic] as his reason for making Clarke a grand-master. When disappointment came, Monty drug Clarke’s work down, in a poor review of that work. So, it read more like a personal review, rather than a book report, destroying the whole value of trying to understand what Clarke had done. And, I feel that Clarke deserves another chance!

Also, the magazine announced Monty as a short story writer, more so than a reviewer. It showed! And, it is a known fact that one writer, reviewing another writer’s works, will not do true justice in such a review. (A fact told to me by many an english teacher.) Here again, it showed! So, again, Monty’s validity is lost, giving reason for the sad use of snide comments, implications and abuse to one of the grand-masters of our field.

As a writer, myself, such tactics of Clarke’s review, by Monty, is the saddest sign of professionalism that I had ever witnessed. And, even though ‘such-and-such’ may be a friend of ‘such-and-such’, I hope that such people will receive the same consideration as the rest of us ‘Sidney Glutz’ types, fighting to enter the market under a decent code of ethics.

STANLEY E. SCHRIEFER
305 Hammes Avenue
Joliet, Illinois 60436

Monteleone replies:

The main cause of your outrage seems to stem from a review which was highly critical

of a majority of a book’s content. Your definition of a *good* book review is one that has only complimentary comments, and a *bad* book review is one that finds fault with the book’s content. I find that to be a sophomoric attitude.

The stance that you take in your letter seems to be one of literary priggishness. You imply that it is against a higher set of laws to criticize *any* author who has produced superior work in the past. What you have overlooked, or failed to realize, is that literature (like all art) is a continually renewing process. Artists cannot allow themselves to rest on past accomplishments if they want to continue to be taken seriously. Clarke is no different than anyone else; he must continually create new works which must stand alone, on their own intrinsic merit, and be evaluated as such.

Let me emphasize something else: there is *no such thing* as a “grand-master” in any art field who is above criticism. You seem to feel that no matter *what* Clarke writes, critics must lavish it with hollow, adulating praise. That is patently ridiculous.

No matter what you say about Heinlein’s themes and messages, it still remains that *I Will Fear No Evil* contained a lot of bad writing, and it was consequently panned by a large consensus of readers *and* reviewers.

It is interesting that you have attacked me in a totally theoretical manner. Not once in your letter is there any mention of any of the stories from *The Wind From The Sun* to support what you are saying. I strongly suspect that you have not read Clarke’s book.

In addition, it would be quite difficult to find many “English teachers” or professors or editors to agree with your statement concerning the inability of writers to “do justice” to the work of other writers. The *New York Times Book Review*, *Saturday Review*, *Book World*, and countless other book review sources are *all* written by writers.

One more thing—your bastardization of my name to “Monty” is distasteful. I can

appreciate what is intended to be honest criticism but I cannot recognize what amounts to nothing more than gaucherie.

THOMAS F. MONTELEONE

Dear Mr. White,

For the record this is only three days late. I finally found the November issue of AMAZING STORIES here November 7 and bought it then. But I've been too busy recovering from the election, among other things, to read the issue until today. Concerning the issue, the fiction was above normal for magazine sf of the 1970's, but, of course, it still wasn't the best collection of sf I've ever read. It was good, however, with Gerry Conway's "Star Walk" being the best of the lot, although my enjoyment of that particular story was restricted by my belief that extrasensory perception is, except in a very limited number of possible cases, immoral, a belief formed almost entirely by personal experience with ESP. "Jupiter Project" and "On the Last Afternoon" were about equal in quality, with "Mere Anarchy" being the least good of four good pieces, failing to achieve greatness because of the lack of originality the author applied in the story to its basic theme, which was old hat, and because of the extreme pessimism expressed in the story, which has also been present in other "after the war" stories.

The other features were all good as usual, although, as you said, the letters column and the editorial were forcibly cut this issue. But, even though the length of the editorial was cut short this issue, I thought you'd possibly continue your discussion of the problems of the institution we call the Worldcon. But I guess you've ended that for the time being. It's too bad because, with all the points you raised, discussed, and debated with readers who wrote in letters about the subject, one aspect of the worldcon went entirely undiscussed. And I'd like to spark discussion of it somehow somehow, here or somewhere else. I mean the nudity and other symptoms of decadence that have become associated with the worldcon in recent years. As most sf fans

know, marijuana, nude bathing, and nude seminude entries in the official costume ball have become part and parcel of the worldcon. And at the last worldcon, in Los Angeles, there was one contestant in the costume ball masquerading as a giant piece of fecal matter and another entry which called themselves "Fafhrd and the Gay Mouser" and performed accordingly. I, for one, have become outraged at this trend, and I know I'm not a minority of one in a subculture of such a large and diversified number of believers as sf fandom. And I *hope* I'm in the majority. Yet the trend continues. Already the chairman of next year's Torcon assures anyone who asks that the costume ball there *will* be open to nude and seminude contestants, and ads promoting both San Francisco and Sydney for the site of the 1975 worldcon that appeared in the LACon program book featured nudity and exploited both it and outright sex.

Well, marijuana, nude bathing, and nudity and exploitation in bidding committee ads are all the results of decisions and actions on the parts of individuals and will only be stopped by the will of all individuals concerned to stop it, although marijuana and nude bathing can be condoned and even aided and abetted by persons of official capacity at worldcons and *this* mustn't be. But nude and seminude costume ball entrants, as well as other entrants such as those I've mentioned at the LACon, are another matter. This tradition must be stopped. And there's only one way I can think of to stop it. That's a boycott of the next worldcon, which is to feature nude and seminude contestants. I myself have started a boycott of the next worldcon in Toronto and I hope it catches on and is joined in by other sf fans around the country, enough hopefully to accomplish its purpose, which is to force nudity out of the official structure and program of the worldcon.

I really believe in this and feel the boycott is necessary to the desired end, despite the undesirability of it. I particularly wish there were some way to avoid it, because a con

committee in my city will be bidding in Toronto on the site for the 1976 worldcon and I'd really like to be there for that. But this unholy trend must stop, and a boycott is the only way. So I'm boycotting the Torcon. Are there any joiners?

LESTER BOUTILLIER
2726 Castiglione Street
New Orleans, Louisiana

Not me. I find your views as expressed above disgusting. At a time when Victorian prejudices against the human body are at last beginning to abate somewhat and healthier attitudes are becoming more common, yours is a cry for repression and censorship. I suggest you examine your own prejudices more closely. Both the costume entries you mention, for instance, were humorous in nature and offensive to few but yourself.—TW

Mr. White:

I'm accepting the invitation in the July AMAZING to make my feelings known to the editor. Following are some comments on the September issue.

Don Davis' cover is so excellent that I have to inquire (even though it may be futile) "Isn't there any way to somehow get enlarged, type-free copies of the cover?" For a good copy (litho or otherwise), I'd be willing to pay in the region of two bucks or so. Analog has, in the recent past, sold type-free copies of *their* covers for \$1.50. Can you permit them to get such a vast lead in the Great SF Cover Race?

"Jupiter Project" is pretty good so far, and I'm now in search of Prof. Benford's "Deeper Than The Darkness". But I do have one gripe: why, oh why is John Bowles talking about feet and miles in the XXIst century? The USA is converting right now to the International System of Units (ab. SI), a revamped metric system. JABOL may be a backwater frontier, out in the planetary boondocks, but still—it doesn't jibe.

"Fat City" gave me a tingle in the area of

my belt buckle. In 1956 a Professor Meier of the University of Chicago said that agricultural/industrial techniques then known or in early prospect could probably handle a population of fifty billion, but we have trouble getting 1800 calories/day to over 50% of the world today.

Pflock's "Lifeboat" is so damn good that I still can't believe it was his first sale. I'm not going to quibble over whether a single-stage spacecraft w/drop tanks, or a two-stage space shuttle is better, I'm just going to demand more! more! and even more!

(A quiet aside—just when did thick, glossy two-page cigarette ads come into style? AMAZING now has 'em, and so do some pb books I got at the same PX.)

"Earth to Earth" hit close to home down here—a local group, *Telophase* (small membership fee, and \$250 for cremation & scattering of the ashes) is being pushed out of business by lobbyists up in Sacramento. What people want, restrictive laws won't let them have. . .

Bob Shaw can do much better than "Deflation 2001". The word that comes to mind is *trivial*.

"Proof" is some better, but for a few seconds I wondered if you had revived the reprint sans label. And speaking of reprint, is the "Portfolio" going to be a permanent filler from now on?

Berry's writing still has the same deft touch, I see. Those "few surprises" you mention will have to multiply like rabbits to fill in the gap he'll leave.

Your editorial is interesting, as usual, and the lettercol is more entertaining than some of the stories. I have to ask one question: is Shaver for real? And a short hint to Dave Hulvey—I prefer verbal constipation to diarrhea. Good stuff, but too long!

MIKE SAWYER
1269 Tylee Street
Vista, CA 92083

Dear Mr. White:

First a general question; then a layman's response to Mr. Harris' letter on new wave

reviewers which was published in the July issue.

Everybody talks about *Locus* and I would like very much to know: how I can go about subscribing or otherwise getting my hands on a copy? [*Check The Clubhouse, when fanzine reviews resume.*—TW]

Mr. Harris criticizes the "so called 'New Wave' writers and reviewers" for their tendency to make subjective judgements about certain authors. He says that "the one prerequisite for reviewing books is a sense of objectivity, the ability to criticize without allowing your own prejudices to cloud your judgement. . . . The important duty," Mr. Harris writes, "is to determine if a book is well written and interesting; in short, readable."

I would like to add one further thing to your printed response. A writer brings certain things to his typewriter and, in most cases, these are reflected to some degree or other in his copy. A reader, too, brings certain things to his reading and the way he reacts to a story, good or bad, is to a large extent determined by what he brings to his reading. A reader's judgment as to the worth of any given story or book is certainly affected by the mechanics of writing fiction (is there a story problem? is it important? is it solved by the main character? are the problem and solution valid in context? is the viewpoint character or viewpoint maintained? is the writing clear and direct?) but it is also affected by the way the reader feels at the time he reads the story and by his own beliefs and prejudices. Consequently, any reader's decision as to whether a story is "well written, interesting and readable" is indeed, whether he thinks about it or not, influenced by his own background, beliefs and training. If the reader is an extreme liberal he may never be able to enjoy reading a Heinlein story and so, to him, a Heinlein story is not readable, no matter how well constructed. Conversely, a conservative reader may not be able to read much of the "new wave" (as per any given letters to the editor column) no matter how well written.

The difference, I hope, between a reviewer and a reader is that the reviewer should be aware not only of the requirements of a good story, but of the prejudices which he brings to his typewriter. There is not now, nor has there ever been such a thing as objective reporting. There is only the appearance of objectivity. It would appear that Mr. Harris would like to preserve appearances. I for one would rather read an honestly subjective review which leaves no doubt in my mind as to the writer's prejudices than one which appears to be objective but can, as anybody who has ever written a news story or done public relations knows, be just as subjective and is a hell of a lot more dishonest.

Like everybody else, I've been having a hard time getting hold of copies of the magazine. Last month I discovered that they were, in fact, coming into my local newstand but were being returned to the distributor without ever having reached the rack. I managed to persuade the lady behind the counter to put them on the rack and stuck out my neck by saying I was sure they would sell. They were gone in a week. I don't know who the people were that bought them but I don't feel nearly so alone now.

STEPHEN G. GROSS
3320 N. Rockfield Drive
Wilmington, DE 19810

Dear Ted,

Late letter. Oh well, what I have to say took some time to think through. I finished reading the conclusion of Bob Shaw's terrific novel, "Other Days, Other Eyes," and loved it! Unfortunately, I did not read the first installment because of the simple fact that the local newstand failed to provide a copy. So, to get the full effect of the story I purchased the paperback edition put out by Ace Books. While reading how Garrod deduced the way in which his father-in-law was framed in a murder rap, I realized that it just cannot happen that way. Let me explain: Garrod theorized that the drugged body of the deceased was hurled at considerable speed at the parked car, making impact,

killing the man, denting the fender, etc., and thrown across to the other side of the street. This cannot be. The man's mass is very small compared to the mass of the car. When the man was hurled into the car, his energy would have been totally absorbed by the car, which would have made it impossible for the body to be tossed even five feet, let alone across the street. Now, if the car had struck the man, the energy/mass would not have all been absorbed by the body. The result: a body across the street, but *only* if the car, with the greater mass, struck the man. I hope you can publish this, as I could be wrong and would appreciate some feedback regarding my theory. (Theory?! it's factual physics!)

But, now to better things! Your July issue was great. The cover by Todd and Bode was terrific. This is one factor that keeps me devoted to AMAZING. I hope you will run some more covers by these artists. Mike Hinge has made a hit with me also, as I believe you once said, "Mike is too good to hog." So, let's see some more of his "artlustrious art" (to coin a word).

Say, what ever happened to Hulvey? I haven't seen any of his inane letters. It's a pity, really; I miss sneering at them. For the length of trash he writes he ought to write a column for some other magazines and leave the space for other readers who have something constructive to say! Do I hear any assent from fellow readers?

Oh, well—'nuff said.

Feedback?

You Bet! Let me hear it!

RANDY MOHR

Rt. 1 Box 274W

Othello, Wash. 99344

Hmmm. . . you've raised an interesting point about "Other Days, Other Eyes"—and one which slipped right past several normally sharp-eyed editors. Bob, have you a rejoinder? As for Hulvey, here's a letter which was squeezed out of an earlier issue—

—T.W.

Dear Ted:

The first thing I noticed in your lettercol was Jack Harris' crude attempt at censorship. He is not as ludicrous as the C. V. Blaines; not as irrational as the Browns and not as unlettered as the Harrises. Unfortunately, he is much more subtle. There are people in SF who probably will buy his false appeal to objectivity. It, at least, *sounds* logical. I'm not sure, but I feel he's merely using this call for Objectivity as a foil to silence others. Therein lies the danger.

Joanna Russ is indeed one of the best current critics. Her standards are unimpeachable. I can only surmise that Jack Harris doesn't want to be disturbed with new ideas, bold insights. Rather, he tells us "please allow me to make my own moral judgments." How is Joanna Russ negating his own free choice of "moral judgments?" If his morality is so unsure, so fragile that it will wilt under the questioning of a critical book review, then I wonder about the ethical content of his "morality." Perhaps it's good that he read Russ after all. It may help him discover any faults that might be in his own way of ordering moral dilemmas.

As for paranoia, I think Harris carries about a burden of his own. Certainly his letter, well written though it is, reflects an uneasiness that could become paranoia. Yet he talks about delivering his own opinions without the vaunted objectivity a good reviewer is supposed to have. I suppose the field is the most flexible in expressing ideas. So, it seems logical that Joanna Russ and others like her are doing just that. Therefore, what is this guy's hassle? I think it boils down to the fact that he doesn't like to see rival, disturbing worldviews freely expressed within the SF community.

I'm sorry, but most of the stories this time around didn't do much for me. Paley's "Smileaway" was a "quickie" alright. In fact, it was quick enough that it didn't even leave a bad taste in my mouth—which it certainly would have had it been much longer. The sleep pill gimmick was just that. As a creative effort, it fell flat. Y'know, as I read

the story, I thought "so he's in a society where sleep's been made illegal (yawn) so what else is happening?" The PIG is a poor joke. But the story seemed so ordinary.

I couldn't get over the Christopher Anvil story either. It was trite. So these meanies try to dope up a culture to exploit it. So? I can read about the Mafia in the papers every day. Nixon's happy Nazi generals in Laos send the opiate of the masses to the good ol' US of A everyday. Well, it was an Anvil story. I'll admit that. Why, the heroes get to think aloud about the ramifications of this goodly deed they have done. Yazz, it was Massive, utterly Massive, when they put down the Unknown in order to trip up the baddies. Sure. Actually, I don't care at all for characters who lecture each other in a subtle attempt to Inform The Reader. That rap about the rule of men, the rule of law and the Unknown sounded terribly artificial. I was fearing that it was actually only a preface to a three page discussion of Atomic Power, or Alien Intelligences, or Flashlights that Kill. But mercifully it was not. Justice merely triumphed, and everyone was happy, oh so happy.

But I did like "Freedom Across the River" somewhat. Taylor constructed the story tightly. The emotional crises of the protagonist were real, not just paper conventions. I liked the scene in which Heisk was forced to kill the girl in order to continue his hopeless escape. That brought so many things into focus. What is freedom really worth? Now that's a pretty deep question to handle in a novelet, but surprisingly Taylor does it justice. The ending wasn't just another shocker finish. It actually fit. Too often, however, second raters like to wind up a story otherwise devoid of artistic merit with an appropriate flash-in-the-pan. Happily, Taylor is not of this ilk.

But the star of the ish was Rotsler's "There's a Special Kind Needed out There." It was a well done effort. The mania for personal freedom in Rotsler's work makes me think he's a civil libertarian of some sort, perhaps even a Jeffersonian liberal. The idea

that a paid company whore would fall in love with a work-hardened veteran seems ridiculous, but Rotsler makes it succeed. In fact, I never thought about this situation being at all out of place until after finishing the story with a satisfied smile. It had that much power over me. Another facet of Rotsler talent which pleased me was the Tuckerization. I delighted in counting up the many fans whose names he managed to use in the course of the tale. There were other fannish and stfnal references as well. In all, I liked this story more than any I've read in AMAZING in some time. Hopefully, there will be more.

Hmmm. . . Jerry seems very Lapidus modest in the lettercol this time. I don't mind reading two of his letters in one ish, not at all. It's strange, but the kind of people who complain so much about him dominating your lettercol could be there just as often if they'd write articulate letters, consistently. Perhaps that's the trouble. Those grippers just don't try so hard 'cause they figure (perhaps correctly) that you don't have the room for everyone, so you pick the tried and true---ie, Jerry---over newcomers. Well, that's not true, I'll wager. I bet you'd devote a lot more space to letters if you could. The level of response is rising. This may mean you'll have to pick and choose even more carefully. Well, that sounds like a rather pleasant dilemma in some ways. Must be good feeling to have prozines with a high level of reader feedback. And to think, you don't even have to pay people to write like one of your competitors. What's yer secret, Ted?

I'm sorry to hear John Berry is not going to continue his work in the *Clubhouse*. However, I think you have a fine replacement in Ed Smith.

The stories were a lot better in the September issue. I'd be hardpressed to select the favorite of mine from among them. They all have superior qualities which recommend them. I was a bit disappointed that Pflock decided to whip the dead horse of social concerns versus the space program in "Life-

boat." I'm no fan of the space program, so the deliberate slanting of the story depressed me. Luckily, he gets beyond this suspect social structure, into the story and on with an interesting human drama before the propaganda becomes wearing.

The endings of all the other stories were rather chilling. Though there is a ray of hope for Mr. Biggers, his plight seems set. Even should he make the "big time" again, what's to keep him there? What's to keep anyone there? I get the feeling that the culture is moving in a curious cyclical mobility in which, generation by generation, the citizens slowly evolve from thin to fat, and back again.

The Busby story managed to make a fresh comment on the tired old cliché of time travel. I enjoyed it much more than any similar time travel story I can remember.

DAVE HULVEY

Rt. 1, Box 198

Harrisonburg, Va., 22801

I choose the letters published here for a variety of reasons and in an effort to see a variety of viewpoints expressed. Some letters are chosen for their amusement value, others because their content is thought-provoking. Yet others, because they offer cogent comments on the stories. The following letter offers another point of view on the letters published here, and makes some worthwhile suggestions. But, in general, "regulars" in this department have become that not because I automatically favor them but because they have consistently met one or more of my criteria. —TW

Dear Ted,

Brian Earl Brown is somewhat right in his criticism of AMAZING and FANTASTIC as having too fannish contents, but the simple truth would appear to be that they are the way they are not just because Ted White is a fannish editor but that the letters he gets are mostly from fans—at least the printable ones. This is probably for a few good reasons: 1.) Fans write letters and readers do

not. 2.) Fans write letters that will be of more interest to your readership. 3.) Individual fans treat letter writing as another form of professional writing and thus write to be printed in your lettercol (fanzines have a limited audience and you can only meet so many people at conventions or through a club, so exploit a large circulation magazine if that is the way your name will appear often.) 4.) Fans, reading other prozines as well as yours—to say nothing of hearing the commentary of others thru fanzines, meetings, telephone calls, etc.—incorporate criticism that they, and readers in general, might not accumulate and mull on. (Some of my own best criticism is borrowed from a fan who, though quite perceptive, refuses to write for anything.)

So, in order that readers may gain more space and fans serve as backup, I have put together some suggestions for letterwriting to prozine editors that, increases your chances of appearing wherever possible:

HOW TO GET YOUR LETTERS IN AMAZING AND FANTASTIC

—Write letters (unless you expect someone to quote you or send in a forgery.)

—Type your letter and double-space it (unless you think that it is so provocative that it will survive crayons and floppy-edged paper rendition.)

—Keep it short. Note how Hulvey rambled on for over 2000 words; and decide to stay under 1000 words, 4 pages.

—Write about the particular magazine (unless you have a new and radical method for reviving *Star Trek*.)

—Avoid defamation.

—Proof-read and edit your letter. It should be short as well as interesting. Avoid rambling generalities.

—Write often. Silence may hurt more than rejection but. . .

—Read the magazine regularly so you know what's happening.

—Become a fan and join a group or correspond or go to conventions, etc. You'll meet people who don't write letters to the editor but who can give you good ideas for

your letters.

—Avoid topics that are already over-worked in the lettercol (just as you would avoid submitting a story to Ted White about an editor in the future who comes up with a radical, but presently impossible, solution to the problem of magazine distribution.)

—Use your sense of humor.

—Don't be afraid to innovate.

—Don't write for that paid letter thing. Egoboo is the ultimate reward.

That's all I have to write on this subject

now, except to say that B.E.B. is now in the running for next year's HP Letterhack Award himself with a letter in AMAZING. This year's hands down favorite is, of course, Jerry Lapidus. But with his withdrawal announced for next year that leaves quite a field of contenders.

JOHN ROBINSON

1 - 101st Street

Troy, N.Y. 12180

P.S. I am betting on Cy Chauvin to beat out Dave Hulvey.

Agony in the Garden

(continued from page 98)

sunset. He saw the onboard signal lights flashing, he heard the intercom crackle out its jargon. Then the ship trembled slightly from the vibrations of the engines and leaped into the approaching night.

On the scanner the Yards shrank into nothingness, swallowed by the vastness of the continent. Minutes later the earth itself was reduced to a small sphere cleaved by a hemisphere of darkness. Diagrams flickered on the information grids and the crew prepared for the FTL jump.

Christ felt a giddy, lightheadedness in his skull. Another vision! No! Not now! But the vision didn't come. Instead he continued to feel a numbed, drunken sensation in his brain. A dull throb grew in his temples until it increased to jackhammer intensity.

He looked at the scanner as if to find an explanation for the pain and he saw

a long cord stretching out from the earth, reaching through the darkness of space to touch the ship. A tenuous umbilical, wispy and ephemeral, pulling at his very being as the ship increased its distance from the earth. The strain was sapping his vital energy, draining him of his awareness. While his consciousness was rushing away from him, Christ felt feeble pulses of racial memory ebbing into him, trying to reverse the flow of his being.

The ship convulsed as it made the hyperspace jump.

Christ's brain exploded into a million fragments and they flickered strobe-like before him. Time became compressed, losing all meaning for him. The umbilical had snapped, ruptured in the darkness.

The last perception was the scanner—a black hole where the stars were winking out.

—THOMAS F. MONTELEONE

ON SALE NOW IN FEB. FANTASTIC

The conclusion of **L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP'S** great new novel, **THE FALLIBLE FIEND**, NIGHTMARE by **ED BRYANT**, WIZARD OF DEATH by **JUANITA COULSON**, AS DREAMS ARE MADE ON by **JOSEPH F. PUMILIA**, ROD MARQUAND'S JUNGLE ADVENTURE by **GEO. ALEC EFFINGER**, plus a new feature by **ALEXEI** and **CORY PANSCHIN** and a portfolio by **VIRGIL FINLAY**.

(continued from page 4)

be worked out, given the feuds and frictions of fandom, but let's face it, sf is big business, and we've got to start acting like what we are. There must be an international organization with a president, representatively elected board of directors, legal advisors, etc. I think that 99 and 44/100ths of fandom will reject this particular suggestion at this time, but it must come within the next 5 or 6 years or we can kiss the Worldcon goodbye. In addition, we can expect specialized comicons, filmcons, and regional cons to spring up to give us an outlet for expressing personal and group needs and preferences. The worldcon can't be made any smaller—it's bigger or none, but we miss a lot of what worldcons used to mean. They were a rallying point for those nuts who read science fiction, and they provided us with reassurance that we weren't the only nuts in the world. What a change: Clifford Simak told me, and I've heard it from other sources, that they don't go to worldcons anymore because they are so huge you never get to see the people you wanted to talk to. (Sometimes, it's press of time. I still can't believe that you spent two days at my house last week and we didn't get to exchange more than 3 or four sentences.)

We not only have to rethink our stand on worldcons, we have to find a way to get some of the old pro-party atmosphere back. The con I run is what I call a working con. It's designed to bring together the working pros: authors, editors, scholars, and librarians. Any fan who wants to pay the fee and sit through serious discussions is very welcome, but we are essentially a three day meeting of SFWA and Modern Language Association types. (Plug for #6: It's at Penn State in Sept. 1973 and is co-chaired by Phil Klass—William Tenn if you don't know all your author pseudonyms—so write Professor Klass in the English department for info.)

There has been a hell of a lot of misunderstanding about the fact that colleges, universities, and high schools are suddenly "into" sf. It's true that some college professors know nothing about sf outside of

what they learned in the pages of Wells, Huxley, and Orwell, but there are pros and there are pros. Tom Clareson, president of Science Fiction Research Association is a member of first fandom and cut his sf teeth scripting *Planet Comics*, etc. My first gaffation was in 1939 when I dropped out because of pre-adolescent pique because a lettercol didn't print a letter of mine: (I was only 9 so there may have been good reasons for this.) Somebody, it may have been Redd Boggs, told me I was lucky: they printed his. As one of "those damn pros" I resent any implication that I don't know what I'm about. Unlike the brave man who kills what he loves with a sword, I may be killing what I love with a kiss, but I don't think so. I think that the pros can learn from the pros, and the pros can learn from the pros. Our interests are not always identical; the writer is dead if he thinks about his writing technique to the point where he is unable to put words down on paper and the prof is dead if he reads everything with an uncritical eye and just gushes on and won't admit that *some* of the stuff that went into *Star Trek* was pure crap or that comics are pure art and high literature. We really need each other; fans, pros, and pros. You are not going to keep sf from being taught as "Literature" and "Art" in the universities; the best we can hope for is that the people who do the teaching are either writers or fans with good critical skills or academics who know the field. If the magazines and paperback books die, we are all going to be collecting unemployment checks. Libraries can't buy paperbacks when it costs them four to five times the original cost of the book to get it ready for their shelves. Teachers can't use the magazines and paperback books unless the college bookstores stock the items (distribution problems being what they are). But most important of all, the books aren't going to be assigned to the sf class unless the teachers get to know the writers. At Secondary Universe conferences we simply cannot afford to subsidize writers to come and talk to us. This must be

considered as a tax deductible item of doing business. I'm with Harlan Ellison when he says that a major con should pay to have the writers in attendance (at least "big names"). For the beginning writer the worldcon is getting less and less a business expense. The contacts made and the "exposure" you get from attending, or even appearing on the program, make you less money in future sales than the contacts you make at SFRA and SFWA meetings. If you have a large fan club working for you, it's entirely possible that you can get a Hugo, and *that's* money in the bank, but the worldcons need the writer, not the other way around.

One final thing. There are some things that certain individuals cannot bear to have criticised. We all have our blind spots: if you are impotent, jokes about a guy who can't make it aren't very funny to you. A lot of fans have built their entire life around sf and are threatened by any criticism of their idol. As an editor you know that without criticism of a story and re-writes and rejections, no writer is going to develop. I mildly disagree with you on *Star Trek*, violently disagree with you on *2001*, find entire issues of your magazine entirely devoid of interest for me; and yet I respect your critical judgement as an editor and turn with excitement and hope to each new issue that I get.

On the other side are some profs who play critical "games". One English teacher at Alexei and Cory Panshin's speech during the last Secondary Universe conference was offended because Alexei gave the paper he read as a deep personal statement of his belief in the type of literature he and Cory like. Another was offended by the fact that they dared to speak on arcane critical materials without having first gotten a PhD in Lit. Crit. We don't need either of them any more than we need the fan who drools over the slightest sf content in film, comic, or TV.

QUITE OBVIOUSLY, the World Science Fiction Convention means many different things to different people. And what was once *the* gathering point for a small an inti-

mately associated community of sf people—both professionals and fans—is no longer small and probably no longer the central focus of a now-diffuse community.

Perhaps, indeed, this sense of "community" is in itself outmoded. Within the last twenty years a cluster of people who, over the entire world, numbered no more than a thousand has mushroomed into ten to twenty times that number. In the process, like a cell, this cluster has divided many times into specialized subgroups, each as large as the original, each claiming linear descent, each considering its own aims and ideals paramount. When members of these individual sub-communities gather together at a Worldcon, their diversity of interest and purpose causes both the clashes and the overwhelming size and turmoil that characterize present-day World Science Fiction Conventions. And, as implied by Ivor Rogers' letter, the end is hardly in sight.

In the end, then, perhaps my own misgivings about the direction in which the Worldcon has turned are those of the Old Timer waxing nostalgic for simpler and never-to-be-recaptured times. But the response I have received from most of those of you who have written to me on this topic is significant: Most of the letters I have received have *not* come from long-time Worldcon regulars, but from those readers who are only now beginning to make the long odyssey to the land of the Enchanted Duplicator. The letter which set this entire chain of discussions into motion was from a reader relatively new to the inner social world of science fiction, and it set the tone: troubled puzzlement and concern. To someone new to science fiction, someone for whom sf is exciting and stimulating, someone who yearns to share his feelings with others like himself, the sf community has always been enticing. There is nothing anywhere else like sf fandom—no other place where a reader can find himself shoulder to shoulder with his favorite authors and other readers of his favorite fiction. This—and the sense of *belonging* which

fandom symbolizes for a reader who knows that his mundane peers *do not read* and feels this basic alienation from his society—has always been the appeal of fandom and its justification.

But today the sf reader who feels the tug of fandom upon his yearnings also finds the sf community frighteningly large and diverse, full of blind alleys and half-glimpsed rites. Now, far more than when—twenty years ago—*The Enchanted Duplicator* was written, fandom is a bewilderingly diverse place, its very size its largest obstacle to access.

And so the letters come in, some full of indignation and some with quite grandiose proposals, but all reflecting a common theme: it's too big. The conventions are too big. The institutions are not easily understood. What seemed easy to deal with has turned out to be overwhelming in its complexity. "How can I vote for the Hugos?" "Where will the next Worldcon be held?" "I went to the last Worldcon and I never saw anybody I'd ever heard of." And, finally, "Why *should* I go to one of these Worldcons?"

I do not have any easy answers for these questions, nor for the problems they imply. At once the urge is strong to preserve what we still have from the invasion of the Barbarian Hordes and to spread the word to those who share our feelings about this unique form of literature. And there is no reconciling the two.

IVOR ROGERS' LETTER presents another facet of the problem, and probably illumines it as well as anyone can. If a resolution is to be arrived at, it will be through continued and knowledgeable discussion. This space will remain open to those who have valid contributions to make.

IN THE MEANTIME, I'd like to return to matters closer at hand for this magazine, and refer you to Ivor's statement that "Teachers can't use the magazines . . . unless the college bookstores stock the items (distribution problems being what they are)."

It has become increasingly apparent to us that a considerable proportion of our readership—and potential readership—exists in the highschools and colleges, and would be better reached if we had greater access to the college book stores. Unfortunately, our national distributor is not really geared to service these markets, and in many cases cannot reach them at all. Now we have instituted a new program to put our magazines into these stores ourselves.

You can help. If you are aware of a college bookstore (or, indeed, *any* bookstore) in your area which does not presently sell AMAZING SF or FANTASTIC STORIES, you can write directly to our publisher—Mr. Sol Cohen, Box 7, Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N.Y., 11364. He is now in a position to process and ship direct orders to such stores, and is presently working out the details of a commission plan whereby you can directly benefit from the sales made through the store(s) in question. We've received letters from some of you in the past in which you've made just this kind of suggestion and I've had to tell you that we had no way to ship directly to such bookstores, due to our contract with our national distributor. Now our national distributor has agreed to allow direct sales when local distribution outlets cannot or will not provide stores access to our magazines.

So—please write Mr. Cohen today. We all stand to benefit.

FINALLY: For several issues we've published an advertisement for full-sized poster reproductions of covers from the early, pulp days of this magazine and its then-sister, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES.

Shortly after the first publication of this advertisement we began to receive letters of complaint about the ad. It seemed that orders to the company in question were being returned by the Postal Service with cryptic notations to the effect that either the mail was misaddressed or the company did not exist.

The advertiser, Ethereal Communica-

tions, Inc., is in no way connected with Ultimate Publications, Inc., nor these magazines—the only points in common are the facts that we've published these ads and we licensed the reproductions of our covers. Nevertheless, we felt a strong responsibility to check out the complaints we received, and we discovered that the problem lay between the poster company and the Postal Service; apparently an incorrect box number had

been supplied. (Readers of our sister magazine, FANTASTIC, can reread my February editorial about the Postal Service and chuckle.)

In any case, we've been assured that the misunderstanding has been straightened out and mail addressed to Ethereal Communications, Inc. will now be delivered as addressed. Which, I trust, will take care of all complaints.

—TED WHITE

The Clubhouse (Continued from page 105)

percentage of what actually shows up in the editor's mailbox is unsolicited—bestowed upon him by a fan who has decided that he likes the editor's fanzine and wants to contribute to it. This then is indeed a richer reward than sticky quarters: it tells the editor that he is

publishing an increasingly attractive and worthwhile fanzine and rewards him in the most positive manner. There are other rewards as well, as Jophan discovers next issue, in the final installment of this classic story.

—TO BE CONCLUDED—

Science in S.F. (Continued from page 110)

tion, at least for a while, but the point is really that it seems unlikely any race would ever persist long enough to want to carry out this drama. It would probably, if it had the energy, move on to another star. Or perhaps, over the

long times we have spoken of here, a creative race could evolve some accommodation with natural forces that will permit it to live forever or to die in peace.

—GREGORY BENFORD

ON SALE NOW IN MARCH SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES

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(On Sale March 6th)

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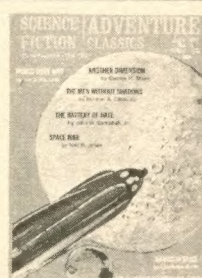
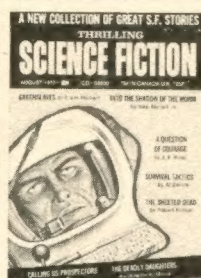
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